Peaks of Shala

By

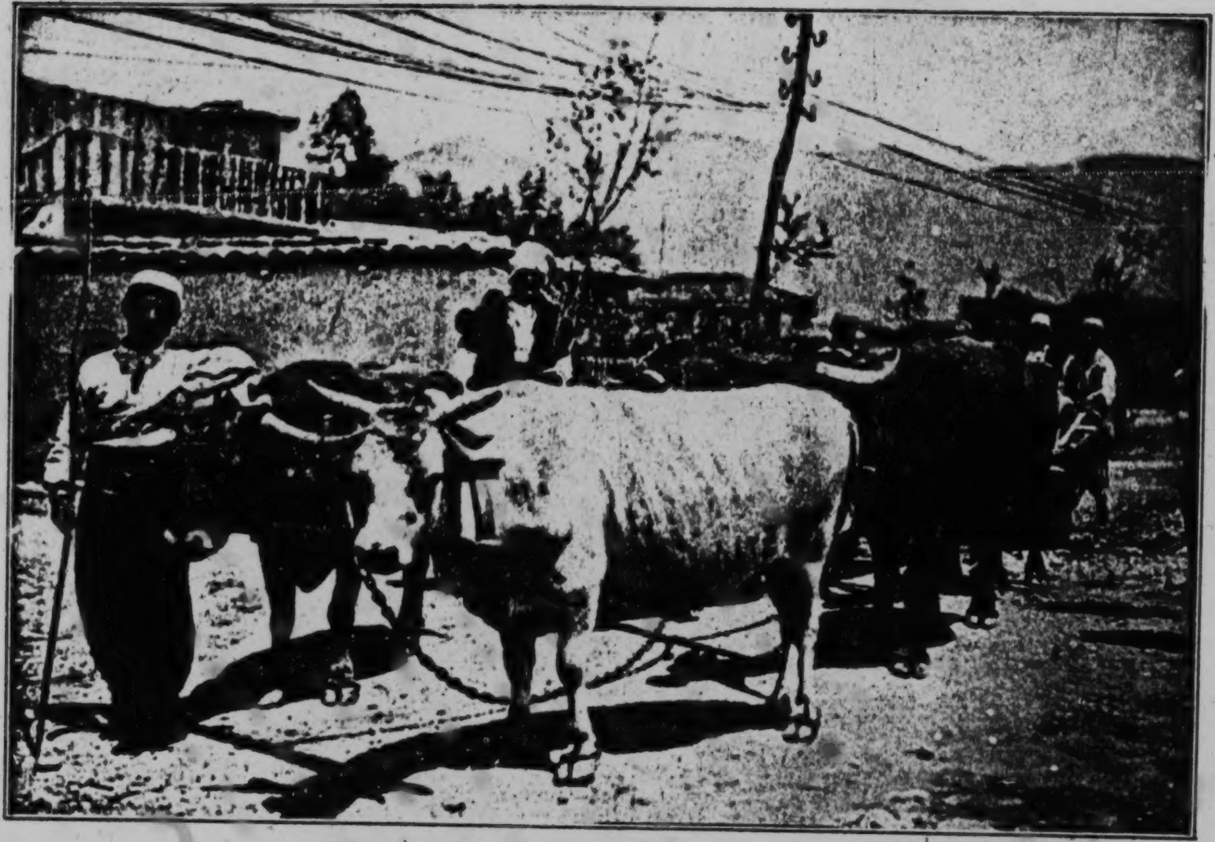
Rose Wilder Lane

Profusely Illustrated by
Photographs taken on a
Special Expedition to
Albania

Harper & Brothers Publishers
New York and London
MCMXXIII

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGI Albania EGI

499



THE ROLLER THAT IS SMOOTHING THE NEW BOULEVARD IN TIRANA

000

PEAKS OF SHALA

Copyright, 1923
By Rose Wilder Lane
Printed in the U.S.A.

D-X

To My Mother

Laura Ingalls Wilder

ooo

CONTENTS

CHAP. PAGE

Introduction

I. Shadows on Scutari plain—The voice in the Chafa Bishkasit—The lands of the hidden tribes—A woman of Shala 1

II. Trails of the mountaineers—The man of Ipek kills his donkey—The house of the Bishop of Pultit—Marriage by the Law of Lec—The blood feud between Shala and Shoshi 15

III. The story of Pigeon and Little Eagle—The prehistoric city of Pog, and the tale of the golden image—The gendarmes sing of politics 33

IV. Welcome to the house of Marke Gjonni—We hear the voice of an oread—A guardian spirit of the trails 54

V. The unearthly marriage of the man of Ipek—First night in a native Albanian house 65

VI. The song of the flight of Marke Gjloshi—The hunted man of Shoshi—The way through the Wood of the Ora—A woman who believes in private property 87

VII. Can a man own a house?—We sing for our hosts of Pultit—Dawn and a meeting on the trail—The village of Thethis welcomes guests—Life or death for Perolli 111

VIII. In the house of Padre Marjan—Lulash gives a word of honor and discusses marriage—The stolen daughter of Shala 131

IX. The chiefs of Thethis probate a will—We visit the house of Lulash—A journey to upper Thethis 156

X. The water ora of Mali Sharit—The coming of the tribes to Europe before the seas were born, and how the first Greeks came in boats—Why Alexander the Great was born in Emadhija, and of his journey to Macedonia—The sad house of Kol Marku 171

XI. Mass in the church of Thethis—A mountain chief seeks a wife—Down the valley of the Lumi Shala, while the drangojt fight the dragon—How Rexh came to Scutari 203

XII. The song of the last great war with the dragon—An unexpected bandit—How Ahmet, chief of the Mati, went by night to Valona—The raising of Scanderbeg's flag—An Albanian love song 220

CONTENTS

OOO CHAP. PAGE

XIII. The backward trail—The man of Shala has a sense of humor—The byraktor of Shoshi hears that the earth is round... 243

XIV. A night by the byraktor's fire—The byraktor calls a council—Rexh to the rescue—The byraktor's gendarme tears a poncho—Moonlight on the Scutari plain................ 259

Postscript. In which is related what may be found behind the curtain of silence which hides Albania, also how the men of Dibra came with their rifles to Tirana, and how Ahmet, the Hawk, chief of the Mati and present Prime Minister of Albania, saved the Balkan equilibrium....... 285

ILLUSTRATIONS

The Roller That Is Smoothing the New Boulevard in Tirana . . . . Frontispiece
The Chafa Bishkasit . . . . Facing p. 8
An Old Shepherd . . . . " 38
Rrok Perolli . . . . " 58
An Albanian Hodji of the Mati . . . . " 76
A Group of Mountain Folk . . . . " 106
The Plateau of Thethis . . . . " 120
The Shopping Center in Tirana . . . . " 150
Once a Day She Comes Walking Over Fifteen Miles of Mountain Trails . . . . " 176
The Bandit Whom We Met in the Cave Above the Lumi Shala and Who Sang Us the Song of Durgat Pasha " 224
The Shala Valleys . . . . " 234
The Shala Guide . . . . " 248
The Kiri Bridge . . . . " 278
A Toshk. . . . . " 296
The Painted Mosque in Tirana and the Low Wall on Which, All Day Long, Men Sit and Discuss Politics " 302
The Fighting Men from the Mountains Who Came into Tirana to Defend the Government While Elez Jusuf Was in Tirana . . . . " 326

INTRODUCTION

121

I WOULD not have this book considered too seriously. It is not an attempt to untangle one thread in the Balkan snarl; it is not a study of primitive peoples; it is not a contribution to the world's knowledge, and I hope no one will read it to improve the mind. It should be read as the adventures in it were lived, with a gayly inquiring mind, a taste for strange peoples and unknown trails, and a delight in the unexpected.

Here I give you only what I saw, felt, and most casually learned while adventuring among the tribes in the interior northern Albanian mountains. It is not even all of Albania, that little country too small to be found on every map. It is simply a fragment of this large, various, and romantic world, sent back by a traveler to those who stay at home.

R. W. L.

○○○ Annette Marquis accompanied the author on her trip through Albania and it is to her skill that the photographs are due.

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

Peaks of Shala ooo

X

CHAPTER I

SHADOWS ON SCUTARI PLAIN—THE VOICE IN THE CHAFA BISHKASIT—THE LANDS OF THE HIDDEN TRIBES—A WOMAN OF SHALA.

000 WHEN the sun rose over the blue, snow-crested mountains that are the southernmost slopes of the Dinaric Alps, it made, on the Scutari plain, a pattern of our shadows; shadows of four small wooden-saddled ponies, each led by a mountaineer with a rifle on his back, of two tall, ragged gendarmes, and of a small trudging boy in a red Turkish fez—all moving single file across an interminable plain shaggy with blossoming cactus.

[492] The wooden saddles were three-sided boxes made of peeled branches; padded beneath with sheepskins, they fitted over the ponies' backs. On top of them our blankets were packed; saddlebags hung from the four corners; enthroned in the midst we rode, comfortable as in an easy-chair, sitting sidewise, our knees crossed, smoking cigarettes and rocking gently with the ponies' pace. And all this was to me an enchantment suddenly appearing above the surface of well-arranged days, as new South Sea islands rise before a mariner in hitherto familiar waters.

Three days earlier the mountains of Albania, indeed, Albania itself, had been unknown to me, and disregarded. I had meant to go by Scutari as a hurried walker brushes by the stranger on the street. Scutari had been merely a place to pass on the way from Podgoritza to Constantinople. And now, in this brightening dawn upon the Scutari plain, I was riding to unknown adventure among the hidden tribes of Dukaghini.

This was the doing of Frances Hardy. That impetuous and efficient girl had seized upon me and my small affairs as six months earlier she had seized upon the refugee situation in Scutari, taking control, making adjustment, creating a new pattern. A thin, athletic, sun-browned girl, so full of energy that her very finger tips seemed to crackle electrically—that was Frances Hardy. An Albaniac, I called her at our first meeting, perceiving that one might disagree with her, argue with her, even poke fun at her, and still be her friend. She had seized on the word with delight—the perfect word, she said—and had returned at once to her attack.

"Constantinople's nothing. Everyone goes to Constantinople. But if you don't see Albania, you're wasting the chance of a lifetime. Up in those mountains—right up there in those mountains, a day's journey from here—the people are living as they lived twenty centuries ago, before the Greek or the Roman or the Slav was ever known. There are prehistoric cities up there, old legends, songs, customs that no one knows anything about. No stranger's ever even seen

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

them. Great Scott, woman! And you sit there ooo and talk about Constantinople!"

"But if nobody goes there, how can we do so?" I said.

"How does anyone ever do anything? Simply do it. Hire horses, get on them, and go."

"Carrying our own guns?"

"Oh, we'll be safe enough! We may run into a blood feud or two, and get our guides shot up, but nobody ever harms a woman. Nobody even [562] shoots a man in her presence."

"She means no Albanian ever does," said Alex.

"Bless 'em!" said Frances, and added, in Albanian, "Glory to their feet!"

I had the vaguest notion of Albania. I knew it was the smallest and newest member of the League of Nations; I knew it was in the Balkan wars, and I knew that recently the Albanians had driven from their shores the Italian army of occupation. If some one, testing my intelligence or psycho-analyzing, had said to me, "Albanians," I should have replied, "Bandits."

But Frances Hardy is irresistible in more ways than one. Therefore, on this spring morning, while mists rose slowly from the blue waters of Lake Scutari and the shadows of the mountains retreated from its shores, we were riding northward toward the lands of the mountain tribes.

There were four of us, not counting our retainers. No, five, for at the last moment small, chubby-cheeked Rexh,[1] in his red Mohammedan

---

[1] Rexh—pronounced Redge.

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

ooo fez, had gravely engaged Frances Hardy in argument as to the desirability of his accompanying us. Twelve years old, a stanch Mohammedan, self-adopted father of seven smaller refugee children for whom he maintained a family life in a hut he had found, he had made all arrangements for the trip without consulting us. He said that he had never seen the mountains and that he thought it necessary to learn about them as part of the education of a good Albanian. He pointed out that he spoke excellent English, which he had learned in some three months of association with Miss Hardy, and that he would be valuable as an interpreter. It was true that we had one interpreter, but there were six men and many saddle-bags; he would keep an eye upon them all. The care of his children he had arranged for; as to the Mohammedan school in which he was a pupil, it taught him nothing; he would take a vacation from it. He would be of use to us upon the trip; the trip would be of value to him. Having said this, he gravely awaited Miss Hardy's decision. When she said, "All right, Rexh," he permitted himself to smile and looked over the packs, suggesting some changes that would make us more comfortable. He now walked behind Miss Hardy's pony, a pistol and a knife in the belt of his American pajama coat.

Our interpreter was also a friend; Rrok Perolli, secretary to the Albanian Minister of the Interior. He was on a vacation, he said, but as the northern interior tribes were antagonistic to the new government, it might be as well not to mention who he was. We were going very near to the Serbian lines; he had recently escaped from sentence of death in a Serbian prison; there was a price on his head in Serbia. It would be easy for one of the tribes to hand him across the line. They could not kill him in our presence, of course, but, once out of our sight, they could in ten minutes find Serbians who would do it for them.

He was a care-free young man, black haired, dark eyed, dressed in the smartest of English tweed suits, with a businesslike revolver and one of the handiest of daggers swinging in leather holsters at the belt. His father was a merchant in Ipek, rich territory now held by the Serbs; the son had been educated in London, Berlin, and Paris, and spoke their languages as well as his own Albanian, also Serbian, Italian, Turkish, and Greek. He enlivened the morning with songs in all these languages, illustrating a running discussion of comparative music. Swaying gently on his pony's back, he sniffed the sweet air, cool from the waters of Lake Scutari; he gazed cheerfully at the blue hills beyond the lake, held by the Serbian armies; he was altogether the happy office man off for a lazy vacation. Just the same, I wondered a bit, taking everything into consideration. It cannot be said that I was entirely unprepared for the interesting developments before us.

Fourth in our party was Alex. Sunshiny hair, softly fluffed; wide blue eyes; and that com-

000 plexion of pink and white, like roses painted on a china plate that drives a dagger of envy into every feminine heart and makes the fortunes of cosmetic makers. She wore a purple tam, a leaf-brown sweater with a purple tie, and the trimmest of riding trousers; she looked like a magazine cover. She was in reality the most hard-headed, soberly sensible of girls; to her finger tips an anti-Potterite. She and Frances were going into the mountains to decide where to establish three schools. They had themselves collected in America the money for them, and this was their vacation from Red Cross work.

At about noon we left the plain, and almost at once our ponies began to stand up like pet dogs begging for cake, their hind legs supporting their weight while front hoofs pawed for foothold above on the stairlike, rocky trail. An Albanian held each of us tightly by elbow or knee, ready to save us from squashy death if the pony lost its balance, and as the little animals strained, clambered, gathered their feet together for desperate leaps, a sudden long high wail broke forth ahead. The two gendarmes were singing.

Walking easily up a trail that I could have overcome only on hands and knees, carrying their rifles and twenty pounds of canned goods on their backs, they were merrily singing. Thumbs pressed tightly against their ears, to prevent the air pressure of their lungs from bursting ear drums, they sent far over the crags the long, shrill, high notes, like nothing human I had ever heard. Frances Hardy, lying almost perpendicular along her pony's back, her chin on what would have been the saddle pommel had there been one, looked downward at me, similarly extended.

"They're making a song to the Chafa Bishkasit, the Road of the Mountaineers," she said. "That's the Chafa up there. We're going over it to-day, and then we'll be in the mountains. Aren't you happy?"

I could find no word emphatic enough for reply as I gazed up at the tiny notch in a wave of snow-crest that curled against the sky five thousand feet above us.

The sun swung to its highest and sank again while we climbed. It was low in the sky—it 133 seemed on a level with us—when we made the last interminable hundred yards up into the Chafa Bishkasit. We were in the sky; there is no other way to say it, and no way in which to describe that sensation of infinite airiness. Forty miles behind and below us Lake Scutari lay flat, like a pool of mercury on a gray-brown floor. At each side of our little gay-colored cavalcade a gray cliff rose perhaps two hundred feet, too sheer to hold the snow that thickly crusted its top. These cliffs were the posts of a gateway through which we looked into the country of the hidden tribes.

I had never seen or dreamed such mountains. Like thin, sharp rocks stood on edge, they cov-

133 ered hundreds of miles with every variation of light and shadow, and we looked across their tops to a far-away wave of snow that broke high against the sky. The depths between the mountains were hazy blue; out of the blueness sharp cliffs and huge flat slopes of rock thrust upward, streaked with the rose and purple and Chinese green of decomposing shale, and from their tops a thousand streams poured downward, threading them with silver white. A low, continuous murmur rose to us—the sound of innumerable waterfalls, softened by immeasurable distances.

202 Suddenly, clear and very far and thin, a call came out of the spaces.[1] It was like a fife, and yet not like it. Instantly our guides were still, attentive. A moment of silence, and farther and thinner, hardly to be heard above the beating of blood in our ears, there was an answer. Then the first note began again and went on and on; there seemed to be a pattern to it, not a tune—words? I looked at the others.

Rrok Perolli was motionless, a cigarette between his lips, his hand arrested in the act of striking a match. Little Rexh, his round face intent beneath the red fez, his mouth slightly open, his eyes wide and blank, was an image of concentrated listening. The two gendarmes stood alert, like dogs straining at a leash, scenting something. [291] Our four guides, in their long white trousers, black jackets, colored turbans and sashes, were like men frozen in attitudes of interrupted talk.

[1] [In Chafa Bishkasit Mountains of Albania -- Analyst]

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGI Albania EGI

2

THE CHAFA BISHKASIT

The "Road of the Mountaineer"—the gateway to the northern lands.

133

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

PEAKS OF SHALA

202 The voice ceased. The other one came back like an echo, so faint I thought I imagined it. Then—Bang! Bang! Bang! The very mountains lifted up their voices and roared. It was like the cataclysm at the end of the world; mountain striking against mountain, the air smashed like glass and falling, clattering. Rrok Perolli lighted his cigarette. The others shifted their rifles, tightened their sashes, said "Hite!" to the horses, and we started on. All around us the echoes were still contending, striking and breaking against one another like ore in a mill.

"What was it?" I cried to Perolli, whose horse was slipping down the trail ahead, kept from going headlong by its owner, who held it by the tail, bracing his bare feet on every foothold.

"Telephoning," said Perolli. "It's the way they send news through the mountains. A man on one of the peaks calls, and another one somewhere hears him and answers. You've seen 'em hold their ears and throw their voices. That's it. And three shots to show that the talk's ended."

"What was he saying?"

"Something about Shala. Shala and Shoshi are in blood, evidently."

000 "Do we go through those tribes?"

My horse slipped just then and a man snatched me from the saddle. The horse, held by the tail, floundered on the trail, striking sparks from his hoofs, shod with solid thin plates of steel; the packs went over his head. My man set me on a

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

PEAKS OF SHALA

000 shoulder-high rock and dashed to aid the rescue. It looked for a moment as though they would all go down upon Perolli below, but the horse got his footing and stood trembling, his head covered with streaming blankets.

I said then that I would walk, but it was not walking. It was jumping, scrambling, dropping. Those mountains were evidently created to be looked at, not to be walked upon. Bathed in perspiration, I stopped from time to time to eat a bit of snow, and twelve-year-old Rexh looked at me with compassion. He had walked nearly twenty miles that day and was still gay and fresh; the men were still singing.

788 "In a minute, Mrs. Lane, we will come to a resting place," the pitying Rexh encouraged me, and in perhaps half an hour my trembling legs brought me around a bowlder to see the two gendarmes stopped in the trail,[1] crossing themselves. A wooden cross, blackened by storms and years, leaned forward above them, supported by a pile of stones on a small grassy knoll. Alex and Frances dropped from their ponies to lie panting beside me on the grass, while the guides, [771] smiling at our whim, stopped also. Each of them crossed himself before sitting down, for the mountain tribes have been Catholic almost ever since St. Paul preached in the Balkans, and missionary priests have put the cross at each resting place on the trails, to bring thoughts of God to weary men.

000 Below our feet the cliffs fell away, down into

[1] [on Chata Bishkasit [10] Mountains -- Analyst]

blue haze; above us were forested slopes, and 000 above them sheer, great cliffs throwing shadows across a dozen valleys. Our small grassy knoll was white with daisies and with fallen petals from a blossoming apple tree that arched above the cross. On it our men lay at ease, beautiful, graceful animals, their rifles swung from their shoulders and laid ready to their hands.

"Why are Shala and Shoshi[1] in blood?" Frances 628 asked, casually, biting idly at the stem of a 576 daisy. Perolli did not know; he had gathered only the fact that there was a feud.

"Do we go through both tribes?" I wanted to know.

"Through Shala. Shoshi's farther down the river. We'll go around it."

"Are our men Shala or Shoshi?"

Perolli glanced at them. "Shala, by the pattern of the braiding on their trousers. So we won't have any troub—— Hello! That's a Shoshi man coming up the trail, now."

It was Alex who acted quickest. She was sitting on a rock beside me, her arms clasped about her knees; she rose instantly and, flinging out a hand in the gesture of greeting, cried in her most feminine voice those Albanian words that sound like, "Tune yet yetta!" and mean, "May you live long!"

The Shoshi man's hand was on his rifle, but his step had not faltered. He replied, coming on steadily, and the appropriateness of the greeting struck me, for if it had not been uttered by a

[1] [Albanian mountain tribes -- Analyst]

[628] woman he would at that moment have been 576 dead. Our Shala men, with perfect courtesy, went through the formalities of greeting on the trail, and this is the form, translated to me by Rexh:

"Long life to you!"

"And to you, long life!"

"How could you?" meaning, "How could you get here?"

"Slowly, slowly, little by little."

No one who has ever seen those trails can doubt it.

291. The Shoshi man sat down, our men offered him cigarettes, and up the trail came a woman of Shoshi[1]. She wore a tight, bell-shaped skirt of horizontal black and white stripes, made of cloth heavier and thicker than felt, the twelve-inch-wide marriage belt of heavy leather studded with pounds of nails, and a jacket covered with three-inch-thick fringe. Two heavy braids of black hair hung forward on her breasts, a colored handkerchief was bound around her head, and her face, smoothly weather browned, large eyed, delicately shaped, was the most beautiful that I [854] had ever seen. On her back, held by woven woolen straps that crossed between her breasts, was a cradle tightly covered by a thick blanket; [283] in one hand she held a bunch of raw wool, and from the other dangled a whirling spindle. Her feet were bare, and as she came up that trail which had exhausted me she sang softly to herself, dexterously spinning thread from the bunch of wool.

[1] [Albanian Mountain tribe -- [12] Analyst]

PEAKS OF SHALA

Cheremi, our gayer gendarme, rose quickly 576 and went to meet her. He took her by the hand and laid his cheek caressingly against hers. He was like a child, Cheremi, with his happy face, deep wrinkled with laughter, the mischievous twinkle in his eyes, his bursts of wit and song. But he looked all of his forty years as he gazed tenderly at the woman of Shoshi.

"She is a woman of my people," he said, leading her gallantly to us.

"Are you a woman?" said Frances Hardy, correctly, in Albanian.

"I am born of Shala[1] married in Shoshi," she 591 answered. Her voice was soft, and her hands and feet would have been madness to a sculptor. In any Paris restaurant those slender fingers, almond nails, and delicate wrists, aristocratic, well bred, would have been a sensation.

We admired the baby, excavating it from five [854] folds of blankets to do so. How they live beneath the smothering I do not know; a Western baby would die in three hours. We asked the mother how old she was. Eighteen, she said, and she had been married three years.

"And have you been home since?"

"Ah no," she said, with a wistful smile.

"Born in Shala," said Cheremi. "But she was married in Shoshi, and in Shoshi she will die."

"I wonder what she thinks of us," I said, for, 000 though she must have felt great curiosity about these strange beings, dropped apparently from the sky upon her well-known trails, she did not

[1] [Albanian Mountain tribe -- Analyst]

reveal it by the flicker of an eyelash, and she asked no questions. It was we who were so rude.

"How old do you think we are?" Frances asked her. She looked at us candidly beneath her long lashes.

"How can I say?" she answered. "I cannot read or write; I am stupid; I gather wood."

The Shoshi man now rose, slinging his rifle back on his shoulder, and said farewell. "Go on a smooth trail," said our men, his blood enemies, who must have killed him at sight if no woman had been there, and he went on up the trail without turning his head, the woman following him.

"Well, we must be getting on," said Perolli. "We've a long way to go, and we ought to get in before dark." And he showed us, far away across the darkening valley, the white dot that was the priest's house where we were to spend the night.

CHAPTER II

TRAILS OF THE MOUNTAINEERS—THE MAN OF IPEK KILLS HIS DONKEY—THE HOUSE OF THE BISHOP OF PULTIT—MARRIAGE BY THE LAW OF LEC—THE BLOOD FEUD BETWEEN SHALA AND SHOSHI

DARKNESS was creeping up the slopes like 000 a rising flood from the valleys, and it had engulfed the trails long before we made the descent into the village of Gjoanni, which I may as well say at once is pronounced Zhwanee. Not that we were thinking about such far-away things as written words. Everything that makes our ordinary lives was already as far from us as another planet. It was as though we had dropped through a hole in time and fallen into the days when men were wild creatures in the forests.

One reads in books of dizzying trails twelve inches wide, on which travelers cling precariously between the sky and sudden death. Long before dense darkness had risen to meet the shadow of the mountain wall between us and the rest of the world we would have welcomed a twelve-inch trail as though it were the Champs-Élysées. We were in a land where a twelve-inch trail is to the people what the Twentieth Century Limited is to America.

My memories become incoherent here. I

000 recall a thousand-foot slide of decomposed shale, the color of an American Beauty rose. The flakes of it were as large as a thumb-nail, and the mass of them tilted at surely thirty-five degrees, sloping to a sheer cliff that dropped I cannot say how far. The stone houses looked like children's blocks at the bottom of it. Across this we made our way on foot, and at every step a considerable quantity of the shale sped away beneath the pressure and plumped over the edge. The fourth time I slipped I remained on my hands and knees; it seemed simpler. And for something like a century I had the sensation a squirrel must have in a revolving cage—steadily clawing upward and making no progress in that direction. But sidewise, crablike, I did eventually come out on the other side and into the waterfall.

The waterfall was called a river. It was about two thousand feet long, and stood on end. About every three feet it struck a bowlder as large as an office desk, and leaped into the air until it hit the next one. The shale was wet with spray for several yards. The water between three bowlders, where we crossed, was a little more than knee deep, and there was nothing whatever leisurely about its progress. I try to be calm about it; I tried to be calm then.

The horses went across first, four men to each horse. One gripped a rope tied about its neck, one firmly held the tail, two stood downstream and leaned their weight against the saddle. Then the men carried across the packs and their

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

000

trousers, which they had taken off so that they should not get wet. Then they quite simply picked us up, slung us across their shoulders, and took us over.

It is a strange sensation, being a bag of meal hanging over a muscular back, clutched firmly around the knees, green water roaring at toes and chin, white spray choking and blinding you, and a thousand feet of hungry bowlders waiting below for your bones. In the middle my man stopped, braced himself, and shifted me to his other shoulder. Then he shouted, and another man came out above us and held his free hand to steady him through the worst of the current.

After we were all over, the men clasped their ears, sent an exuberant call out through the twilight, were answered from the far distances, fired all their guns several times in joyous unison, and then, slinging them back on their shoulders, went on blithely.

They went on blithely into such a rain as I had never supposed could be. Around the shoulder of the mountain we walked into it, as one walks into a shower bath—scattering drops on the fringes of it so few that they did not break the shock of its impact. Water fell upon us suddenly; our piteous gasps and small cries of protesting misery were muffled by the sound of its pouring on the rocks. In an instant rivulets of chilly water were wandering over shrinking skin from soggy mufflers to filling shoes, and there was no longer gayety in the world. Even

PEAKS OF SHALA

000 the Albanians were gloomy, occupied with the task of keeping the slipping horses on the trail. In a few moments we had left their struggles behind us.

We climbed doggedly, in silence. Only the swishing of the relentless rain and the clicking of our staffs on the rocks made little noises against the distant roaring of waterfalls. By some trick of light reflected from peak or cloud, the trail and the valley below it were visible in a green-gray ghost of daylight, which made us seem unreal even to ourselves. And we climbed, interminably, forever, putting one foot before the other with the patient deep attentiveness of trudging animals, while rain dripped unheeded from forehead to cheek to chin. We climbed, absorbed in detail of slippery shale and stubborn bowlder, till Perolli's exclamation shocked us as though a rock had spoken.

We must wait for our men, he said, and we dropped where we stood and sat soddenly. To light a cigarette was as impossible to us in that rain as to a swimmer under water. We sat and looked at one another, and laughed aloud, and were silent again. The horses came past us at last, each held by halter and by tail, and slowly they struggled over the crest of the mountain and disappeared. We should go on, Perolli said,
166 and we murmured assent, but still we sat. When a stranger appeared on the trail[1] against the gray sky we moved only our eyes to look at him.

He was a young man, dark eyed and hand-

[1] [on Chafa Bishkasit Mountain trail --Analyst]

some, but haggard. Besides the rifle on his back 166
was strapped a small baby. The little head, uncovered, streaming with water, appeared above the thick woolen-fringed collar of the man's black jacket. The baby's mouth was open, drawn into a square of misery, but no sound came from it. The man's jacket had been darned and darned again, till no thread of the original weaving was visible; his white homespun woolen trousers, hung low on the hips, were worn so thin that the darns no longer held together, and tatters fell around his bare ankles, above feet wrapped in rags. The remnants of black braiding on his trousers were of a pattern I had not seen before; I could not guess his tribe. Behind him a shapeless bundle of household goods moved slowly on the tiny hoofs of a donkey, and the little beast's drooping ears and nose almost touched the trail.

"Long may you live!" And when he had returned the greeting we continued the courteous formula. "How could you get here?"

"Slowly, slowly, little by little."

"Are you a man?"

"I am a man of Kossova, of the district of Ipek," he answered, and it was not necessary to say more, for the Serbs hold Ipek. The memory of their taking it moved like a darkening shadow over his face, and it is best to ignore such memories.

Yet there was a little hope in his vague voice. He was going, he said, in search of a farm on

166 which he could live. He had tried to live in the Shala country, but it was impossible there. There was too little land for the tribe of Shala, and the making of land is slow among mountains where stone walls must be built to catch the little earth that remains when rain melts limestone. He had heard that in the valley of Scutari there was soil, as there had been in Kossova, and his voice sank into silence as though it were a burden too heavy to lift.

000 But he tried to make the baby smile for the American *zonyas*. The baby, too exhausted to cry any longer, was equally unable to smile, and this last baffled effort suddenly became rage. It was only a twist of the haggard face, an explosion in the depths of the man's spirit, and, like an explosion, it was over before we saw it, leaving on our eyeballs a picture of something that no longer existed.

"He has a beautiful smile," the father said, apologetically, "very beautiful," and he took up his rifle.

"Long may you live," we said. "Go on a smooth trail."

In a moment the rain had blurred the figures of the man and the tiny donkey, moving slowly down the mountain side.

We wiped the streaming wet from our faces with water-withered hands, picked up our staffs, and drove our bodies again to their task of climbing. The burden of the world's helplessness in misery was heavier on our spirits than the weight

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

of water-soaked woolen on exhausted muscles. Why should man toil over such heart-breaking trails, endure and struggle through such sufferings, only to keep alight a little fire of life, when life means only suffering and painful effort? The rifle-shot which interrupted the question seemed an answer to it. We stopped, and the same thought was in all our eyes while we waited for the echoes of the shot to roll away like thunder among the cliffs.

Then Cheremi pressed his thumbs tightly against his ears and sent down the trail the wild high note of the "telephone call." He waited, repeated it, repeated it once more. An answer came.

The man of Ipek had killed his donkey. It had slipped from the trail; it would not try to get up. And there on the mountain side, five hours from shelter, with night upon them, he had killed it.

"I wish you blind!" Cheremi called through the rain, and fired his rifle to end the talk.

We must help the man, we said. We must do something. But Cheremi and Perolli, in whom also weariness had become anger, went on over the ridge of the mountain, and we followed them. It was true; what could we do? We could not carry the donkey's pack, the only goods left to the man of Ipek.

In half an hour we met a beautiful girl. Her hazel eyes and chestnut hair shone through the grayness of the rain, a wide silver-studded marriage belt held the dripping tatters of a Shala ooo dress about her slender body, and her ankles were white above delicate feet bruised by the trails. She drove before her six starveling goats that constantly tried to evade her; they were traveling strange trails and wanted to turn homeward.

"Long may you live!" she murmured, anxiously urging them forward with her staff, while we climbed the bowlders above the trail to let them pass. Cheremi bent to take her hand and lay his cheek against hers, and for an instant there was a beautiful smile on her lovely troubled face. When she was gone we continued to sit, gazing into the valley. Far below us, below jagged cliffs as vague as clouds, below tortured trees from which every bough had been hacked to feed hungry flocks, below slopes of bowlders which ran down into darkness, lights were already gleaming. A thousand feet above them on the other side of the valley the white speck of the priest's house promised us rest and warmth.

"But we must wait here," said Perolli, surprised by our impatience. "The woman is the wife of the man of Ipek, and she is a Shala woman. He has killed his donkey; it may be that he is mad and will kill her, too."

Cheremi's childlike smile was gone. His rifle lay across his knees, his profile was set and stern, cruel. He was a man of Shala, and, though he had never before seen this woman, he would avenge her if there were need for vengeance, for she had been born in his tribe. So we waited for

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

the crash of a second shot. But only the rushing sound of the waterfalls came up to us from the darkening valleys.

With staffs and aching feet we found the trail when we went onward. Unseen bowlders bruised our knees, unseen rocks rolled when we stepped on them. We went for two hours down a slide of shale, slipping at every step and clutching the empty darkness. At its bottom we came to wide rapids, and this time the men put us on the little horses, and the horses crossed by jumping from bowlder to bowlder; this seemed cruelty to animals, but we were too weary to protest, and already we had become Albanian in one thing—an absolute indifference to danger.

When, an hour later, one of my pony's hind legs went over the edge of a crumbling trail and only my man's grip on his tail kept him from quite going over, the incident interrupted for only a second my enjoyment of the wild, weird scene; a hundred miles of mountain tops fighting with their shadows the light of the moon.

At ten o'clock we fell from our saddles in the walled courtyard of a ghostly white house, and a tall figure in the hooded robe of a Franciscan father lighted us across it with a flaming pine torch.

We really were in the Middle Ages, or in some century perhaps even earlier. An hour after our greeting by the Bishop of Pultit we had forgotten even to realize it; so adaptable are human beings that we quite forgot that modern civilization had ever been.

PEAKS OF SHALA

000 The hooded priest lighted us with his torch up a flight of worn stone stairs and into a low, beamed room on the second floor of the bishop's house. There the bishop, rising from a wooden bench, welcomed us in Albanian and Latin. He wore a rough, homespun woolen robe; his bare feet were in wooden sandals; a rosary of wooden beads hung on his chest. He was perhaps fifty, rotund, jovial, dignified. Perolli bent one knee and kissed the episcopal hand; little Mohammedan Rexh, in his red fez, gravely saluted; Cheremi, the ragged gendarme, put his rifle in a corner and knelt for the bishop's blessing.

We sat, Alex, Frances, and I, in a row on a wooden bench in the chilly bare room. A servant came in, barearmed, barelegged, clad in one piece of brown cloth that reached his knees, and the bishop gave orders; the servant returned with a hammered copper tray holding an earthen 213 cup and a wooden bottle of rakejia. Now rakejia is a cousin to vodka and one of the strongest drinks that ever turned the imbiber's blood to liquid fire. We girls had debated about it; what should we do when courtesy required us to drink it? We had decided that Perolli should explain that we came from America and that in our tribe it was forbidden to drink intoxicants. But after sixteen hours of travel in the Albanian mountains we did not hesitate. One by one we took the cup that the servant filled, and drained it dry. From that time onward we drank the stuff like water, and it had no visible effect upon us, though in a Paris restaurant one glass of mild 000 wine will make me realize that a second would be unwise. I don't explain this, I simply note the fact, and it gives me a different point of view on the chronicles of hard-drinking past centuries.

We sat there, talking, for an hour or more. 793 The bishop[1] said that he had never been out of the mountains except for a trip long ago to the Vatican in Rome; he had been there a year, and had conversed with his brother priests in Latin. Then he had come back to the mountains and had lived there ever since. His diocese included all the northern tribes, and he visited them from time to time, riding wherever a donkey could carry him, and walking where it could not. Ten years earlier he had had another foreign visitor, a Miss Durham of England; he had heard that she later wrote a book in which she told about the visit, and if he could have afforded it he would have liked to send for that book.

No, the Church had not very greatly altered [771] the ancient customs of the people. They were all good Catholics, and attended mass. But [764] they still buried the dead uncoffined, with three apples on the breast, and when they put a stone or a wooden slab above the grave they often carved on it, not only the cross, but also the sun. One would note, too, that at the rising and setting [788] of the sun they made the sign of the cross to it.

He was not too intolerant of these things. After all, beyond the sun was always the good God.

[1] [Franciscan Bishop of Pultit --[25] Analyst]

000 583 God. It was not strange that what I had heard of the marriage customs had baffled me, he[1] said; I should not look for traces of marriage by capture or marriage by purchase; the basis of the tribal ceremonies is fire worship.

585 593 On the day of the wedding the bride, elaborately dressed, is carried, screaming and struggling, from her father's house, and by her brothers is delivered to the husband's family at a place midway between the lands of the two [582] tribes. Since each tribe is technically a large [619] family, claiming a common prehistoric ancestor, it is forbidden to marry within the tribe. The bride carries with her from her home one invariable gift—a pair of fire tongs. When she arrives at her husband's house she takes a humble place in the corner, standing, her hands folded on her breast, her eyes downcast, and for three days and nights she is required to remain in that position, without lifting her eyes, without moving, and without eating or drinking.

"Though I believe," said the bishop, smiling, "that she takes the precaution of hiding some food and drink in her garments, and no doubt the mother-in-law sees that she is allowed to rest a little while the household is asleep." And he explained that this custom remains from the old days when the father of each house was also the priestly guardian of the fire, and anyone coming to ask for a light from it stood reverently in that position, silent, before the hearth, until the father priest gave it to him. The bride, new-

[1] [Bishop of Pultit -- Analyst]

comer in the family, is a suppliant for the gift of 585
fire, of life, of the Mystery that continues the race. 593

On the third day she puts on the heavy belt that means she is a wife, and thereafter she goes about the household, obeying the commands of the elders, always standing until they tell her to sit, and for six months not speaking unless they address her. And it is her duty to care for the fire, and with her fire tongs to light the cigarettes smoked by any of the family, or by their guests. Sometime, when it is convenient, she and her husband will go to the church and be
married by the priest. Usually she has not seen 584
her husband until she comes to his house, since she is of another tribe and the marriage is arranged by the families.

"We have tried to prevent the betrothing of children before they are born," said the bishop,[1] smiling ruefully, "and in many centuries we have had some effect. Children now are usually not betrothed until they are two or three years old. Even that we combat, of course, yet I cannot say that the custom makes much unhappiness. Husbands and wives are good comrades; they almost never quarrel and they are devoted to their children. But you will see all that for
yourself. Yet occasionally there is something 000
like this Shala-Shoshi affair, which I fear will lead to much bloodshed. But the dinner is ready and my servant will show you your room and bring water to wash your hands."

The servant led us to the bishop's own bed-

[1] [Bishop of Pultit -- Analyst]

PEAKS OF SHALA

000 room, furnished by a mattress laid on a raised platform of boards. Our saddlebags and blankets had been piled on the rough wooden floor, and Rexh held the torch while the bishop's servant poured cold water from a wooden bucket over our hands. Then he offered us a beautifully hand-woven towel of red-and-white striped linen, and when we had dried our hands he led us down a stone stairway, through a kitchen crowded with villagers, where an old woman tended cooking pots over a fire built on the earthen floor, and into the dining room.

There was a long, rude table covered with hand-woven linen, rough benches on each side of it. The bishop sat at its head, on a stool, and served the soup. The Franciscan brother and a meek little priest in black sat humbly near the foot of the table, and did not speak. There was nothing in the stone-floored, plaster-walled room except the table, the benches, and a rain-stained photograph on the discolored wall—a picture of a gathering of Albanian priests, taken many years ago in Tirana.

628 619 "The feud between Shala and Shoshi[1] looks very bad," said the bishop.[2] "I fear there will be many deaths. We do what we can to prevent it, all the authority of the Church is used against these feuds, but——" He shrugged his shoulders. "It is their way of enforcing their law, the Law of Lec, which has come down to them from prehistoric times. And the Albanians are very tenacious of their own customs."

[1] [Albanian Mountain tribes -- [28] Analyst]

[2] [Bishop of Pultit -- Analyst]

PEAKS OF SHALA

He filled our glasses with red wine. "You 628
must not mistake my people," he said. "The 619
blood feud is bad, very bad, but it is their only way of enforcing laws, which are, in general, admirable.

"The blood feud is not a lawless thing, as strangers sometimes think. Nor has it anything to do with personal strife or hate. It is a form of capital punishment, such as all nations have, and it is governed by most strict laws.

"You must remember that in these mountains we have never been conquered by foreign governments. The Roman Empire claimed to have overpowered Albania, it is true, as later the Turks did, but neither Rome nor Constantinople was able to send its government into these mountains. The people live as they did before the days of Greece, except for the influence of the Church. It is a simple, communistic society, [181]
without private property or any organized government. The only law is the moral law, enforced by tradition, by custom, and by common consent. The father of the family becomes the chief of the tribe, but he has no power that conflicts with the moral law, the ancient Law of Lec. There is a tradition that all this group of tribes [173]
was once, long ago, given this moral law by a man named Lec, but that is doubtless a myth added to through the ages.

"This Law of Lec is based on personal honor, which is also the honor of the tribe. A man or a tribe must punish an insult to honor by killing

628 the man who has given it. Thus, if a member of
619 a tribe is killed unjustly by a man of another
tribe; if a woman is stolen or injured or affronted;
if any part of the tribal property is stolen; if a
man or a tribe fails to keep a *besa* (a word of
honor) in a matter of land or war or marriage or
[312] irrigation—you will find excellent and admirable
irrigation systems here—then the crime is punished by death. But if these crimes are committed against a member of the same tribe, then the house of the guilty man is burned, and he is cast off by the tribe and must go into the wilderness and live alone.

"You will see this law working out in the case of Shala and Shoshi. Last week a Shala man crossing the lands of Shoshi—the two tribes having some time ago sworn a *besa* that they would keep the peace between them—saw a woman of Shoshi on the trail. He said to himself that he would like that woman for his son, who was unmarried, though of marriageable age, because his betrothed had died in childhood. So the man of Shala took the woman of Shoshi to his house for his son, and there she is now.

"Apparently," said the bishop, dryly, "she did not make any outcry, for her husband was in their house only a few yards away, and it is a question whether she and the son had not previously arranged the abduction. However, the husband was, of course, obliged to avenge his honor, and he went at once to the heights above Shala and shot the son. This was, according to

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

the Law, an unjustifiable murder, since he should 628
have killed the father who was the abductor. 619
Therefore the father waited on the trail above Shoshi and shot the husband.

"It should have stopped there, but Shoshi's honor is involved as long as a woman of the tribe is held unlawfully in the hands of Shala. So a hot-tempered Shoshi man has shot a man of Shala and it has become a blood feud between the two tribes. As the woman was born in Pultit, some say that Pultit's honor is also involved. So you see that the affair becomes complicated; I have been told by wise men that no less than sixteen deaths will wipe out the insults on both sides. You perhaps heard telephoning about it as you came in? The mountain sides have been ringing with it. But what can one do? Excommunication, of course. At every mass I tell my people that the anger of the Church will descend on all who take part in the killings, but the Law of Lec holds them, and it is, after all, their only civil law."

It took time to tell this, what with filling the 000
glasses, serving the food platters of delicious stewed rabbit and bowls of macaroni, a dish the bishop had grown fond of in Rome—and then there were the cups of syrupy Turkish coffee to be ceremoniously served and drunk, and for
hours, struggling with an agony of sleepiness, we 574
had implored Perolli in English to make our excuses and let us go to bed, he refusing sternly, since it is the most terrible breach of mountain hospitality for a guest to grow sleepy as early as midnight,

ooo hospitality for a guest to grow sleepy as early as midnight. But at one o'clock, seeing Alex's desperate eyes stony with the effort to keep them open, and myself beholding at times two bishops, very small and far away, and at times one, who loomed like a mountain, I managed in Latin to suggest that we were tired. We had, I said—calling upon vagrant memories of Cæsar and using both hands to illustrate—been walking and riding over the trails since five the previous morning. The bishop was interested, and asked my opinion of the mountains in comparison with those of Switzerland and of the United States, and I hope I replied coherently.

The rest I do not remember. Perolli says that I sat up straight, and talked, though sometimes rather strangely. Frances and Alex were dumb, he says, but smiled as though they were enjoying the conversation. How was he to know that we were really tired? He thought we had been joking about it.

CHAPTER III

THE STORY OF PIGEON AND LITTLE EAGLE—THE PREHISTORIC CITY OF POG, AND THE TALE OF THE GOLDEN IMAGE—THE GENDARMES SING OF POLITICS.

I CAME back to full consciousness for an instant, stumbling up the stairs, and gathered that we were going to bed. By the torchlight my wrist watch said a quarter past two. Frances and Alex do not remember even that. Rexh awakened us at eight by shaking us, and we were rolled in blankets on the floor of the bishop's room. Outside was the pouring sound of a steady rain.

As soon as we were fully roused the bishop's servant brought us tiny cups of Turkish coffee. That was breakfast. Afterward we rose with groans, opened the heavy wooden shutters of the window space, and looked out. Through a rain that poured almost as solidly as a waterfall we saw a low-walled courtyard and a schoolhouse.

Beyond the schoolhouse there lay some fifty miles of the wildest beautiful mountain country —blue peaks, fifteen-hundred-foot slanting rocks, soft pink and rose and purple and green; brighter green masses of young foliage in the valleys, bronze-brown and bright-brown bare forests

PEAKS OF SHALA

000 above them, and here and there snow drifts
flung up among smoky-gray clouds. Thirty-two
waterfalls I counted from that window, veining
the mountains with wandering streaks of silver.
871 But our gaze came back and fastened upon the
school.

"I didn't know they had one in the mountains!" exclaimed Alex, thinking of her Mountain School Fund. "I thought our school at Thethis would be the first one!"

"Padre Marjan certainly said so when he walked down to ask us for it," said Frances.

"Perhaps this isn't a school," said I. Though
it looked like one, the little square stone house
through whose open doorway we saw rows of
[291] benches, and boys sitting on them, barefooted,
wearing the long, tight, white trousers braided
with black that hang low on the hip bones, the
gorgeous sashes, and the short black jackets
thick with fringe, that were white centuries ago,
but were changed to mourning when Scanderbeg
died for Albanian liberty.

It was a school. The pale, meek priest[1] in
black, who is the bishop's ecclesiastical household, showed it to us with pride; he is the teacher.
178 The Turks and the Austrians had blocked all
871 attempts to bring schools into the mountains,
he said, and the people, not knowing that schools
existed, were naturally not eager to have them.
But now the Land of the Eagle was said to be
free, after so many centuries of Turkish rule in
the valleys, and refugee children who had fled

[1][bishop of Pulti --Analyst]

before the Serbs were coming back to their tribes 178 and telling about the American school in Scutari, 871 so that all the people wanted their children to learn to read and write. The chiefs themselves, [212] hearing that there was a Tirana government, and not being able to write or read letters about it, or to learn from newspapers (oh, simple-minded, mediæval people!) the truth about European politics, saw what education meant.

The people had taken rocks from the mountains 871 and made the schoolhouse. They had cut precious trees and made the benches and the desks. They had made a slate of a slab of the native rock, set in a rough wooden frame; they wrote upon it with softer rocks. From Italy, across the Adriatic to Durazzo, up to Tirana, to Scutari, and into the mountains—a two weeks' journey by donkey and river ferry—the bishop had got three copy books and a bottle of ink. Pens had been made from twigs. The priest had one book printed in Albanian.

Since the boys must herd the flocks in the [857] mountains, they could not spend the day in 233 school. There is so little land that the goats and sheep are fed from trees. The shepherd climbs a tree, carefully cuts the tender branches, and throws them down to the nibbling beasts that eat the young buds and strip off the juicy bark. There is no tree in all the mountains that the shepherds have not climbed; not a tree that is not a branchless, gnarled trunk.

So the school was open from six to nine in the 871

871 mornings, and the boys came to it, some from ten, twelve, fifteen miles away, and after school they walked back again and took out the flocks. The school had been open six weeks; already the copy books were half filled with beautiful, neat writing, and the boys not only read easily from their one book, but had no difficulty with sentences that Perolli wrote on the slate.

I asked the priest what I could send him from Paris, and his eyes filled with tears as he asked, hesitating a little for fear it was too much, if I could send just a little white paper and half a dozen pencils. The ink was almost gone; they could make more from berries, but he would like the boys to see pencils and learn how to use them. And, of course, when the two copy books were filled, there would be no more paper.

000 Returning from the dusky schoolroom through the gray slant of the rain, we found in the bishop's house the most handsome man we had [291] yet seen. Tall and lithe, wearing the tight black jacket, scarlet sash, and snowy woolen trousers braided in black, he amazed us by his animal beauty and grace. His silver chain was of the finest pattern, a ring was on a hand that might have been perfectly gloved on Fifth Avenue, and his quiet air of the aristocrat would have made him remarkable in any company. Beside him was a manly little boy perhaps seven years old. He wore with the same grace a miniature copy of the mountain costume. His manners were perfection of grave courtesy, his eyes were

keen and intelligent, and his frank smile was charming.

They were father and son, come to arrange for the boy's schooling. The father spoke to the boy with the courtesy he would have used to an equal, and the boy replied as one. There was such pride and love in their eyes that it was beautiful to see them together. For a little while the father spoke of his ambitions for his son; he hoped to be able to send him to the American school in Tirana, he dreamed even of a university in Europe. He was proud that he and the boy were mountain men, but he wanted the boy to be wiser, more learned, than the mountain life had let his father be.

"I," he said, "am Plum [Pigeon], but my son is Sokol [Eagle]. I gave him that name because his wings shall be stronger, his eyes keener, and his flight higher, than mine."

Having been thus presented to the bishop, Sokol knelt for a blessing, Plum on one knee beside him. Then the two went across the courtyard to the schoolhouse, and I shall not forget the two against the dusky doorway, the father looking down at the boy, and the boy visibly courageous and resolute before the mysteries he was facing.

"Long may you live," said the father. "Go on a smooth trail."

"Long may you live," said the boy. "God take you safely home." Then he went into the schoolhouse, and Plum followed the trail toward the mountains.

PEAKS OF SHALA

000 "He is a good man, and brave," said the bishop, "and little Sokoi will be a great one."

At noon the rain was still pouring from apparently inexhaustible skies, but Cheremi, Rexh, and Perolli assumed, as a matter of course, that we would go on; the difficulty was that there [361] were no mules. There should have been a mule in the village, whose houses were scattered, miles apart, all the way down the deep-walled gorge to the banks of the River Shala, twenty-five miles away, but when Cheremi hastened lightly up a twelve-hundred-foot peak and cried to the farthest house that we wanted mules, the answer came back that there were none since the war.

So he found an aged man—seventy-five years old, he was, but still agile and bright eyed—and put our packs on his back, and at noon we started out on foot, with fresh-peeled staffs provided by Rexh, and new-baked corn bread in the saddlebags.

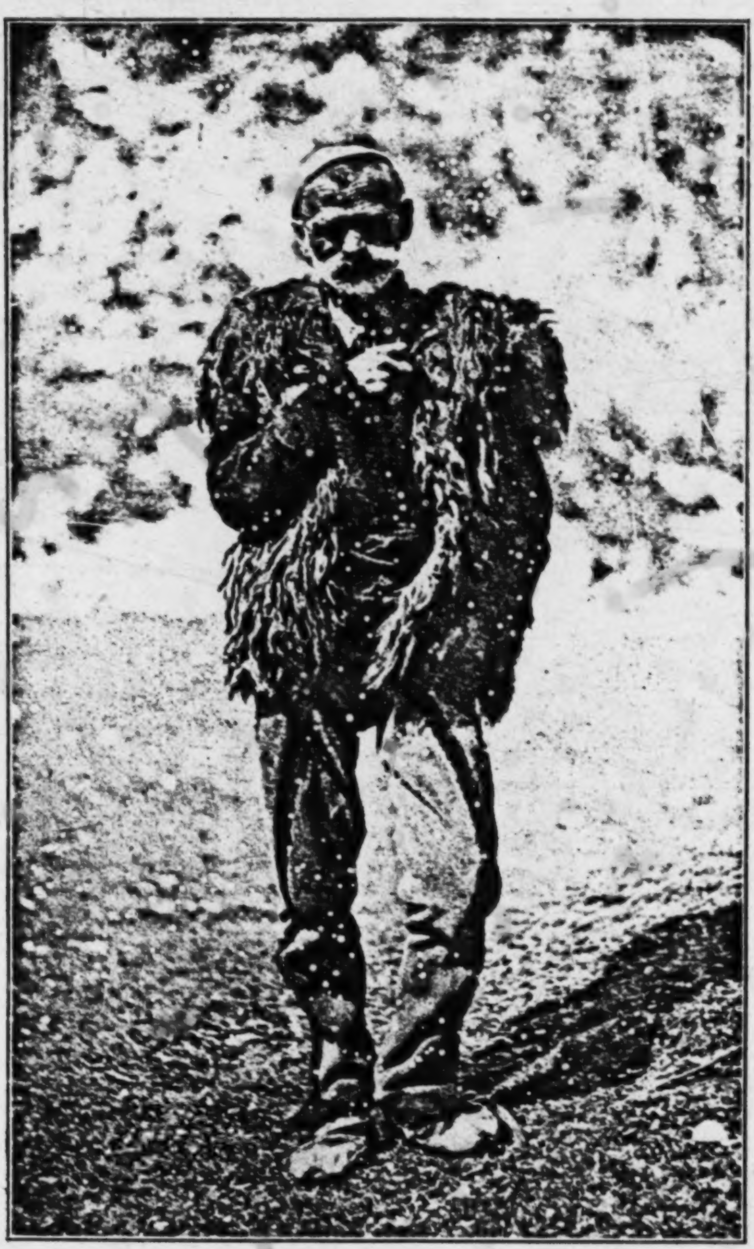
576 202 After an hour of desperate climbing we stood on the peak from which Cheremi had telephoned. The bishop's house and the school lay dwarfed beneath our feet, and Perolli, standing on a rock and holding his ears, sent down to them a shrill hail. "Ooeeoo! Monseignor!"

The bishop appeared in his woolen gown, a rifle in his hand, and all the guns in our party went off at once, and again, and again, while fifty miles of sheer rock cliffs barked back at them. My hands were over my ears, but I saw the three answering white puffs from the bishop's

[Pultit, in Albanian [88] Mountains --Analyst]

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

291



AN OLD SHEPHERD

Wearing goatskin opangi on his feet, and trousers braided in his tribal pattern.

(380)

576 rifle, and while the echoes were dying, still
202 repeating themselves down the valley, we saw him hand it to his servant and protect his eardrums with his thumbs. His call came up to us, "Go on a smooth trail!"

"Now," said Perolli, thrusting his revolver back into its holster, "we have said good-by to the bishop. *Allons!*"

ooo "And to-night," I said, joyously, "we'll sleep in a native house."

Frances and Perolli did not seem enthusiastic about that hope, and as we toiled up trails that were stairways of giant bowlders, or slid down slopes of pale-green shale, above valleys where the clouds swirled beneath us, the discussion continued fragmentarily.

Frances's reluctance I could ascribe to the shrieking of her muscles, which, if tortured as mine had been by the previous day's travel, must be screaming with agony at her every step. But Perolli, true Albanian in spite of his years of living in foreign capitals, was as fresh as the crisp air that blew upon us between the gusts of driving rain. He leaped up bowlders, he joined in the singing of the others, who, with sixty-pound sacks on their backs, walked easily up the incredible steeps, their thumbs at their ears, chanting songs of ancient battles with the Turks.

"Don't you think it safe to stay in a native house?" said I, remembering that he was an officer of the government traveling incognito among unfriendly tribes, and that within sight

000 were the Albanian mountains held by the Serbs who had put a price on his head.

576 "Safe?" said he, scornfully. "A man is always
627 safe in another man's house. It has happened not once, but often, in these mountains, that a man has given shelter to a hunted man and found, while the guest sat at his fire, that he was harboring a man who had shot the son of the house not an hour before. The neighbors bring in the body, and the father sits beside it, with the murderer under his roof. And the father gives him coffee and food and drink and rolls cigarettes for him, until the guest is ready to go, and then he accompanies him for an hour's journey, so that none of the tribe can injure him, and says a courteous farewell to him on the trail. 'Go on a smooth road,' he says. 'There is a word of peace between us for a day and a night because you are my guest. After that I will follow you all my life, until I kill you.'"

I began to see the exquisite, infinite complications of that system of law and order, the Law of Lec, which guides these people in all their actions, and I thought, "This goes back beyond the Middle Ages," remembering the old Bible stories of the time when men lived similarly, under the laws of Moses.

000 But already the sense of perspective in time was growing dim; we were living in the past, not thinking of it, and the scores of future centuries in which men would spread over Europe, invent private property, build great cities and

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

empires, discover America, and invent machines, 000 became as faint to us as the old memory of a dream. By the next day we had forgotten it all; two weeks later I was to come back to a room with a rug on the floor, a window in the wall, a bed, and a stove, and feel such a sense of strangeness among them that, tired as I was, I could not sleep between the unfamiliar sheets. Now that I am back in my own century, writing of those days in the Albanian mountains, I understand why men so easily slip into the ancient savagery of war and all war's atrocities. All that we call civilization is like a tune heard yesterday, a little thing floating on the surface of our minds, which sometimes we can keep step to, and then in a moment it is gone so that we cannot remember it.

Upon the trail that day we were barbarians, 628 simple and primitive; we were isolated, small bits of warmth and energy in a hostile universe of stone and rain. And when, out of the gray mist of the trail ahead, another simple barbarian appeared, we greeted him with the unquestioning acceptance of understanding. He was a man of Pultit, bare in the rain save for turban, loin cloth, and opangi. He was bound for the house of the bishop to bring back the boy Sokol, whose father was dead.[1]

Standing around him in the rain, we listened to the news. Three days earlier Plum had sheltered a woman who was leaving a cruel husband, a man of Shoshi. She had slept beneath Plum's roof one night on her way to her father's tribe.

[1] [See cat. 116, pp. 36-37 -- Analyst]

628 That morning, as Plum returned after taking his son to school, he had met the husband on the trail, and without a word the husband had shot him down. But as he died Plum had managed to reach his revolver and had killed the husband, saying, "This, from Sokol." And as Sokol was now the head of his family, he must return from school to the house where the women were mourning his father.

Cheremi thrice made the sign of the cross. "Plum was a good man," he said.

"And loved his son," Perolli added. For Plum with his last effort had avenged himself, had closed the account. He left no blood feud to darken the life of the little Eagle. The boy would be known as the son of a hero, and to-day would take his place as a chief and a member of all village councils.

600 The man of Pultit, having told us this news and wished us long life and smooth trails for our feet, went on down the mountain side, and gripping our staffs tighter in water-soaked hands, we resumed our climbing.

We had begun that day with ponchos over our sweaters; our gendarmes had begun it by taking off their jackets and trousers, so that the sluicing rain would not wet them. These garments were in the packs, protected by ponchos, and, barelegged, barearmed, with only the colored sashes about their waists and cloths wound around their heads, the men went up and down the interminable trails as easily as panthers. Now and

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

then they stopped and, kneeling on the trail, 000 reached down a hand to one of us, pulling us up over unusually large and steep bowlders, and from time to time, as we struggled and panted after them, they offered to carry us. With the blood pounding in our heads, blinding and deafening us, our lungs torn with gasping in our aching sides, we refused, and struggled on. Our gloves had become sodden in a moment; we stripped them off, and soon the ponchos which impeded our climbing followed them; and then, as we were wet to the skin, anyway, we discarded sweaters and began to long for the complete freedom of nakedness. At each step our feet made a sucking sound in the water that filled our shoes, but the exertion of climbing and sliding kept out bodies warm, and by degrees, as suppleness returned to our stiff muscles, we began to see the magic country around us. We stood on rocks from which we saw a hundred miles of snow-tipped peaks, blue gorges, bronze-brown forests. White and smoke-colored clouds swirled beneath us, and through rifts in them we saw tiny green terraced fields, the blue hair line of water in stone-walled irrigation ditches, and houses tiny as those on a relief map, made of stone and almost indistinguishable from the native rocks, as large as they, among which they were set.

"I shall not be happy until I stay in one of them," I said, and at that moment we heard a hail from Cheremi, who stood on the trail thirty feet above our heads. He[1] gestured toward three cone-shaped peaks of solid rock that, rising steeply from the gorge three thousand feet below, rose to some hundreds of feet above the level of our eyes. Little Rexh, silent and watchful as ever at Frances's side, translated his words.

"There is an old city," he said, "the city of Pog. He says it was built by his people, men of the Land of the Eagle, a hundred years before the Romans came."

"Tell him to wait where he is," we exclaimed, for, looking again at the nearest cone-shaped mountain, we saw on its top traces of old walls, and on its sides what might once have been a circling road, and we clambered up the trail to ask Cheremi about it.

"It is a very old city," said Cheremi. "It was built before men began to remember." Standing on the edge of the trail, which was also the edge of the gorge, he looked over perhaps a quarter of a mile of space to the sharp-pointed peak of rock. In one hand he held his rifle, its butt resting on the rock at his feet; the thumb of the other hand was thrust through a fold of the scarlet sash about his loins, and the sun, appearing blindingly at that moment in a rent of the clouds, shone on his wet white skin and made it shimmer like satin. The deep seams worn in his leathery face by forty years of childlike, mischievous mirth became shallow (an unaccustomed look of solemnity had ironed them out) and, looking straight and unwinking at the sun, he said, "The

[1] [Albanian gendarme accompany-[44] ing author's expedition -- Analyst]

sun is now the only living thing that saw that 361
city built."

We shaded our eyes with cupped hands and looked at it. The world was suddenly all aglitter, every leaf a heliograph, every giant slope of rock reflecting a thousand rays, and our eyes watered. But, gazing steadily, we saw the fragment of a wall, and below it, curling around the tall, slender cone of the mountain, traces of a road that had been walled, and a broken flight of four broad steps, torn apart by the roots of a tree. It was the only tree we could see on the three-thousand-foot height, but, like all the others of the forests, it was a gnarled, branchless trunk; its young boughs had been cut every spring to feed the goats.

"Does anyone live there now?"

"No," said Cheremi. "It[1] is the place where 776
the ora love to sit, and sometimes one hears them crying, like trees in a wind, when there is no wind. But no human person lives there."

"What is an ora?" I asked, when Perolli had translated.

"An ora—a spirit of the forest, soul of a tree or a rock.[2] Nature spirits," said Frances. "You know the Greek oreads? Well, that's the Greek name of the Albanian ora; the Greeks got them from the Albanians."

"And they still live in these mountains?"

"Apparently. Did you ever see an ora, Cheremi?" she asked him, in Albanian.

"No. Very few people see them. But I have

[1] [Ancient city of Pog --Analyst] [45] [2] [see also pp. 61-64, pp. 66-76 --Analyst]

776 heard them singing, and once, in the Wood of
the Ora, which we will pass to-morrow, I heard
761 them[1] talking together in the twilight. I heard
776 them say that my cousin would die," said
Cheremi, seriously.

"And did he die?"

"Of course," said he, surprised by the question. "He was a strong man, but within six weeks, sitting beside the fire one night, he said that he felt a pain in his heart, and in an hour he was dead." Cheremi crossed himself.

361 "But about the city of Pog. Does anyone ever go there? Could we go there?"

People sometimes went, he said; the shepherds always went to cut the branches of the trees, which belonged to the tribe of Pultit. How far was it from where we stood? He thought for
[804] a time, and said, "Four hours." Albanians have no measure for distance except the time it takes to walk it, and this time corresponds with no measurement of ours. He had said that our walk of that day would be an hour and a half; we had already been exhausting every ounce of energy and breath for four, and were scarcely a third of the way.

"What does one find when one gets there?"

"Very little. There is the old wall which you see, and on the rock one can follow the lines of the walls of houses, built square and with many rooms, and from the rocks which have fallen they must have been tall houses. That is all, except that on some of the large stones one can

[1] [The ora or natu[illegible] spirits-[46] Analyst]

see that the sun circle was carved. Everything 361
else has been eaten by the great flocks of years.
But there is still treasure buried there.” 173

“How do you know?”

“I know because I have seen men who have seen it. There is a man of Pultit whom I know. He went to the old city of Pog one day with his goats. There had been a great storm and part of the wall had fallen. Before that day the wall had had a corner, where now you see nothing. Where the wall had fallen there was a golden image of a man, as large as himself, shining in the sun. The man of Pultit forgot his goats in looking at it. It was too heavy for him to carry, so he took a stone and broke off four of its fingers, and with them in his sash he went to get his brothers to help him carry away the image.

“But it was night before he reached their house, and they said it was better not to go to that city until morning. In the morning they went, and where the image had been there was nothing but stones. Afterward, in thinking of nothing but that image, the man went mad, and he now lives alone and naked in the mountains, talking to the ora and begging them to take him again to that image. But before that he sold the fingers to the gold beaters in Scutari, and they said those fingers were of the purest gold and not alloyed, as gold is now. I did not see the fingers, but many did before they were beaten into ornaments.”

“What do you think became of the image?”

PEAKS OF SHALA

[173]

"Doubtless it[1] had a bird or snake for guardian, 789 and that spirit came and took it away again," 776 said Cheremi, and Perolli explained that when one buries a treasure one calls to some creature of the woods and intrusts the hoard to its care. "O spirit of the small gray serpent with poison in thy tooth, guard for me this treasure. Let no man see it for ten times ten years, and then deliver it only to those of my family," would be a simple formula, but usually more imagination is used. For instance, Perolli knew of a man who called the large magpie to watch him bury his treasure, and he said to the bird, "Let no one uncover this gold until two black mice have dragged three times around this tree a carriage made of an acorn cup, with a small mouse in it." But his incantation was overheard, and the crafty neighbor caught and dyed and trained the mice and made the carriage, and had them drag it three times around the tree, after which the magpie gave up the treasure. Otherwise it would have disappeared when a hand was laid upon it.

000 "But does Cheremi really believe these things?" I asked myself, and, looking at his serious face and Perolli's, I was struck with the startling idea that Perolli believed them, too, in spite of his English suit and European education, and I felt in my own mind something like a soft landslide, uncovering possibilities of wild beliefs in myself. "Anything can happen in the mountains of Albania," I said, picking up my staff and rising, for the shadows of the western mountains were

[1] [Image of gold, see cat. 116, p. 47-- [48] Analyst]

already climbing up the cone-shaped pinnacle of ooo Pog.

We went on, up and down the trail, over mountain after mountain that at home no one would dream of climbing. The rain fell again, bringing premature night down with the flood of water, and again we came into clear weather and saw all the colors of sunset on the clouds below and around us.

Many times we passed above villages that [361] clung like mud-daubers' nests on the cliffs below the trail, and once Cheremi stopped at the trail's edge and, closing his ears firmly with his thumbs, sent out into the interminable miles of air the clear high note of the "telephone call."

A voice from the depths responded, and, searching with our eyes, we discovered a white-and-black figure among the rocks some hundreds of feet below. Then this conversation ensued:

"Are you a man?"

"I am a woman of Shoshi, married in Pultit."

"What is the name of your husband?"

"The name of my husband is Lulash."

"Say to your husband, Lulash, that Cheremi is on the trail. Cheremi goes to Plani with four strangers from far away and with a Mohammedan youth of Scutari. To-night Cheremi will be in Plani. Say to Lulash that he may bring to Cheremi in Plani the hundred kronen which he owes him."

"I will say to my husband, Lulash, that Cheremi is on the trail. Cheremi goes to Plani

600 with four strangers from far away and with a Mohammedan youth of Scutari. To-night Cheremi will be in Plani. I will say to Lulash that he may bring to Cheremi in Plani the hundred kronen which he owes him."

"Oo-EE-oo-oo!" The final shrill call came circling back among the peaks like ripples of disturbed water, and up through its circling came [576] the answering call of the woman. Since he had been telephoning to a woman, Cheremi did not fire his rifle three times, for which my ears were grateful.

We went on. And once, as I clambered up the side of a rock pile that the child of a giant might have made in building a tower with blocks, my staff (ah, how grateful I was for that third leg!) dislodged a stone the size of my head, and Cheremi, turning like a cat, flung himself downward and caught it as it tottered on the trail's edge. Then I looked and saw, far below, the miniature images of a woman and a cradle, set among moving white spots that were sheep, and I saw that the rock would have gone down the slope like a bomb from an airplane and struck the cradle beside which the woman was sitting, and, I thought, spinning.

628 "One must be careful on the trails," said Cheremi, and as the men at that moment had finished a song with a joyous fusillade of rifle shots, I asked if people were not sometimes killed by stray bullets. Perolli said that of course it happened now and then, but everyone under-

stood that the killing was an accident and it 628
caused no blood feud. Accidents, he remarked, will happen anywhere, and he spoke of the death toll of automobiles, which at that moment seemed as far from my knowledge as the twenty centuries that separated us from them.

"Through the Land of the Eagle the news is 533
sung," the second gendarme began a new song, 186
thumbs against his ears and sixty-pound pack on his back, as he ascended the rocks above us. Cheremi took it up, repeating each line as the other improvised it, and under his breath Rexh translated them for me, storing them away in his memory, from which I later transferred them to my notebook. As I listened I glanced at Rrok Perolli, disguised servant of the new government about which they were making the song, but his face wore a cheerful and unconcerned expression, like a mask so perfect that it seems real.

"Through the Land of the Eagle the news is sung—— (It has a double rhyme as they sing it, Mrs. Lane, but I do not know the English to make it rhyme in your language)," said Rexh, apologetically.

"What have the men of Tirana been doing?
I am a son of the mountain eagles;
I do not give up my nest while there is life in my claws;
I do not yield to the gendarmes!
I will drown them in their own blood.
Rise, rise, and go to the door.
There is a sergeant with twenty soldiers.

PEAKS OF SHALA

[533] Ho! Ho! Sergeant, I am not the man you think!
186 I will not bow and be led to the slaughter.
I will not be killed like a lamb for the men of Tirana,
I am a goat and will fight!"

"What do they mean about sergeants and soldiers?" I asked Perolli, and he said, "These tribes do not understand that the new government in Tirana is an all-Albanian government. They don't think as a nation; they think as tribes. They think the government is a Tirana government, trying to destroy their liberty as the Romans and the Turks and the Austrians and Italians and the Serbs and the Greeks and the Peace Council tried to do. They know that the Peace Conference in Paris arranged to divide Albania into three parts, giving one to Greece, one to Italy, and one to Jugo-Slavia (and would have done it if Greece and Serbia had been strong enough at the moment to grab a third of a hornets' nest and if we hadn't driven out Italy). They know there is a connection between the Peace Conference and the League of Nations, so, now that the Albanian government is a member of the League, they think that the men of Tirana have joined their enemies. They were so dangerous that we had to send soldiers up here to burn the houses of the Shala chiefs. But everything will be all right as soon as we can get the government going and begin building schools and roads up here. They just don't understand yet."

000 Political discussion was cut short by one of the men who had run ahead a few miles to inform the

village of Plani that we were coming, and who now popped out of the gathering darkness to announce that the priest refused to receive us in his house. 000

"The macaroni!" cried our men, with a contempt like vitriol. The priest was of Italian blood; no Albanian would have been such a dog, they said. And we sat down on the mountain side to consider what we should do.

"Why won't the priest take us in?" I asked, shivering in my wet garments, for night had brought chill down from the snow-covered peaks above us. They were still pale fawn color and pink where the clouds left them unhidden, but the valleys were black, and far away on some distant slope there was a small light, red as a ruby—the flare from a charcoal burner's fire.

"He says he has no servant," replied the man who had run ahead to tell the priest that we were coming, and even Cheremi, the joyous gendarme, snorted aloud.

"Priest though he is, he is a macaroni!" and, "Only a macaroni would so disgrace our villages!" the Albanians exclaimed, shamed before the strangers by such incredible inhospitality.

"Perhaps he knows who you are and is afraid to take us in?" I said to Perolli.

"No. He doesn't know who we are, and is afraid to shelter strangers who may be Serbian or English spies. Cowardly Italian!" said Perolli.

"My house," Cheremi volunteered, hopefully, "is only across two mountain ranges. You would be welcome there."

CHAPTER IV

WELCOME TO THE HOUSE OF MARKE GJONNI—WE HEAR THE VOICE OF AN OREAD—A GUARDIAN SPIRIT OF THE TRAILS.

574 CONCEALED by the darkness, we lay back in our wet clothes on the wet rocks and shook with smothered laughter. How Albanian! While Perolli with a hundred honeyed words made excuses for the feebleness of foreign women, already weary with only sixteen miles of mountain climbing. He was still explaining when up the trail came the flare of a torch, and an Albanian boy of perhaps fourteen years appeared, a turban on his head, a rifle on his back, and a silver-hilted knife stuck through his orange sash.

"May you live long!" said he.

"May you live long!" said we.

"How could you?" He meant, "How could you get here?"

"Slowly, slowly, little by little," we replied.

"Are you a man?" said Perolli.

"I am a man of Pultit, of the village of Plani, of the house of Marke Gjonni," said the boy. "In our house there is always a welcome for the stranger. The door of the house of Marke Gjonni is open to you."

"Glory to your lips and to your feet," said

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

Perolli, and to us in English: "His father has 574
sent him to ask us to come to his house. What do you think?"

"Is anyone going to think?" we cried. "There'll be a fire, won't there?"

We followed the boy up the mountain side, our lungs sobbing and our feet slipping on the trail dimly lighted by the torch, and so steep that the palms of our hands were bruised by climbing it. Out of the ceaseless swishing murmur of falling water that had surrounded us all day one note rose above the rest; flying spray was like a mist on our faces; we were following the
edge of a waterfall hidden by the dark. Then 574
the trail turned; we stood on a level ledge; and 576
suddenly all the rifles in the world seemed to go off not ten feet away.

"It's all right!" Perolli's shout came up from the darkness beneath our feet. "They're only welcoming you!" But I have never felt so defenseless, so nakedly exposed to sudden death, as I did standing there, clutching Frances and Alex, while sharp flashes darted out of the blackness and deafening explosions contended with more deafening echoes. All the household of Marke Gjonni stood on the trail, every man firing his rifle until it was empty. Then a woman appeared with a torch, her beautiful face and two heavy braids of hair painted on the darkness like a Rembrandt, if Rembrandt had ever used a model from ancient Greece, and we made our way through a jumble of greetings ("May you

574 live long! May you live long!" we repeated), [576] and up a flight of stone steps along the side of a blank stone wall, and through a low, arched stone doorway.

The stone-walled room was large—as large as the house itself—and low ceilinged, and filled with shadows. Near the farther end, on the stone floor, a bonfire burned in a ring of ashes. In the corner near the door several goats and two kids and two sheep stopped their browsing on a heap of dry-leaved branches, and looked at us with large eyes shining in the torchlight. Five or six women came out of the shadows to greet us, and behind us the men were coming in, reloading their rifles, hanging them on pegs, closing and bolting the heavy wooden door.

Rexh and our two gendarmes were already busy unrolling the packs, spreading our blankets over heaps of dried grass on the other side of the fire. In a moment we were sitting comfortably on them, extending wet feet toward the flames, while one of our hosts put a fresh armful of brush on the coals, another hacked slivers of pitch pine from a great knot of it and set them blazing in a small wrought-iron basket that hung from the ceiling, and another, with hollowed-out wooden bowls of coffee, of sugar, and of water around him, began making Turkish coffee in a tiny, long-handled iron bowl set in the hot ashes.

"We're going to have a night in a native house, after all," said I, happily, and added, starting, "What's that?" A long, thin, curiously un-

earthly sound—hardly a wail, though that is the 514
clearest word I have for it—was abroad in the night that surrounded the stone house. Even the shadows seemed to crouch a little nearer the fire, hearing it, and when it ceased the splashing of the waterfall was louder in the stillness. Then the man with the coffee pot pushed it farther among the coals, and with the little grating noise the movement of the household recovered and went on.

"Are you a man?" said our host, courteously, turning his clear dark eyes on Perolli, and Perolli, silencing me with a glance, folded his arms more comfortably around his drawn-up knees and began the proper conversation of a guest.

By degrees the house of Marke Gjonni grew clearer to our eyes; they became accustomed to the firelight and the shadows and saw the guns hanging on the wall, the browsing goats that, with a little tinkling of bells, worried and tore at the dried green leaves on the oak branches heaped for them, the outlines of a painted wooden 252
chest filled with corn meal, at which a woman worked making a loaf of bread on a flat board. One of the men raked out some coals and set in them a round flat iron pan on legs—the cross and the sun circle were wrought on its bottom. In the midst of the flames he laid its cover to heat. Soon the woman came with the bread, a loaf two feet across and two inches thick, and deftly slid it from the board into the pan, which it exactly fitted; one of the children put the cover over it and buried all in hot ashes.

PEAKS OF SHALA

291 There[1] were ten or twelve children—little girls half naked, with serious, beautiful faces and long-lashed brown eyes; small boys dignified in little long tight trousers of white wool beautifully braided in black, short fringed black jackets, and colored sashes and turbans like those of their [854] fathers. Two cradles stood near the fire, covered tightly over high footboards and headboards with heavy blankets; presently a woman partly uncovered one and, kneeling, offered her breast to the tiny baby tied down in it. Only the baby's puckered little face showed; arms and legs tightly bound, it lay motionless and uncomplaining, and when it was fed the mother kissed it tenderly and covered it again, carefully smoothing the many folds of thick wool and tucking the ends tightly beneath the cradle.

576 Meantime Cheremi was taking off our shoes and stockings and bathing our feet in cold water brought by one of the women. This was proper, since when guests arrive the member of the family nearest to them by ties of blood or affection acts as their servant, and Cheremi, being an Albanian who knew us, was judged to stand in that position. By the time we had drawn on dry woolen stockings from our packs the first 576 cup of coffee was ready. To the boiling water in 272 the tiny pot the coffee maker added two spoonfuls of the powdered coffee, two of sugar, stirred the mixture till it foamed, and poured it into a handleless little cup which he offered Perolli. But Perolli indicated me, and without the

[1] [In home of Marka [58] Gjonni of Pultit—Analyst]

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

492

BROK PEROLLI

[58a]

576 slightest revelation of his surprise the host
272 changed his gesture.

"Beauty and good to you," said I, in Albanian, prompted by Perolli, and when I had drunk the thimbleful, "Good trails!" said I, handing back the cup. For this is the manner in which one
273 drinks coffee. Do not make the mistake, when
576 next you are in the Albanian mountains, of saying the same things when you are offered rakejia. For rakejia there is a quite different form of courtesies. And as soon as the coffee cup, rinsed and refilled with freshly made coffee, has been given to each guest in turn, you will be offered rakejia.

Alex and Frances and I looked at one another, but we drained the large goblet of colorless liquid fire in turn, without a word of protest. It might have been the water that it looked like, so far as it affected our minds or tongues, for I continue to ascribe to the fire warmth and the blessed sensation of resting after those trails the sense of contentment that filled us all.

000 "Strange," I said, for I still dimly remembered another way of life, as though, perhaps, I had sometime dreamed it, "chimneys that don't draw make so much smoke in a room, yet here there is no chimney and a large fire, and we don't notice the smoke." And, leaning back on the piled blankets, I gazed up at the pale-blue clouds of it, rising beyond the firelight into a velvety darkness overhead. But I really felt that I had always lived thus, shut off by stone walls from the mountains and the night, ringed around by

000 friendly familiar faces, smelling the delicious odor of corn bread baking and hearing the tinkling bells of goats.

609 "Where is America?" said our hosts, and: "How large are your tribes? Do they have villages like ours, and mountains? Do you raise corn? How many donkey loads do you raise to a field, and what is your method of cultivating the soil? Have you stone ditches for carrying
000 water from the rivers to the fields?" Rousing ourselves, we tried to give them in words a picture of our cities; we told of horses made of iron, fed by coal, snorting black clouds of smoke and racing at great speeds for long distances on roads made of iron; and I told of the irrigation systems of California's valleys, and Oregon's; of orchards plowed by steel-shod plows; of great machines as large as houses, cutting grain on the plains of Kansas; of mountain streams like Albanian mountain streams, which we harness as one might harness a donkey, and how their invisible strength is carried unseen on wires for many, many long hours—as far as an Albanian could walk in two days—and used to turn wheels far away.

609 Resting comfortably on their heels around the fire, they listened as one would listen to a traveler from Mars, the men opening silver tobacco boxes and deftly rolling cigarettes for us, the women spinning, the children—each given its space in the circle—propping little chins on beautiful, delicate hands and listening wide eyed. The questions they asked—and the elders were

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

as courteous to the children's curiosity as the 609 children were to theirs—were keen and intelligent, but when it came to explaining electricity I was as helpless as they and could answer only with vague indications of some strange unknown force which we use without understanding it.

A woman, barefooted, barearmed, graceful as 776 a sculptor's hope of a statue, lifted the cover from the baking-pan, crossed herself, made the sign of the cross over the hot loaf, and took it up. Stooping, with the smoking golden disk between her hands, she stopped, suddenly struck motionless. The long, strange cry came again through the darkness, like a voice of the wind and the mountains and the night.

"Look here, Perolli," said I, my stretched nerves unexpectedly relaxing into the kind of anger that is part of fear, "what is that? Don't be an idiot! Tell me!"

"It is an ora,[1] if you must know," said Perolli, and he looked at me defiantly, as though he expected me to laugh.

"An ora!" said Frances, sitting up. The strange, unearthly call came again, very far away this time; we strained our ears to hear it. Then silence and the roaring of the river. The turbaned men in the circle of firelight, who had understood the word, nodded.

"Holy crickets! Rose Lane, we're actually hearing an oread!" Frances exclaimed. And Alex said: "Oh no! Undoubtedly there is some natural explanation."

[1] [A nature spirit, see also [61] Fcat, 116, pp. 45-6 pp. 66-76 -- Analyst]

776 "How do you know there isn't what you call a natural explanation for an oread?" Frances demanded, and the wild notion crossed my mind that if Perolli had not been with fellow sharers of the blessings of Western civilization he would have been crossing himself instead of lighting another cigarette. Little Rexh, in his red fez, spoke earnestly: "Do not believe there are no ora or devils in these mountains, Mrs. Lane. There are very many of them."

"Of course," said I, and I do not know how much I believed it and how much I assumed that I did, in order to encourage our hosts to talk. "Do you often see ora in this village?" I said across the fire to the many intelligent, watching eyes, and Rexh picked up our words and turned them into Albanian or English as we talked.

"We do not see the ora," said a tall man with many heavy silver chains around his neck. "Do you see the ora in your country?"

"I do not think they live in the West," said I. "I think that they are very old, like the Albanians, and, like you, do not leave their mountains. This is the first time I have ever been where they live, and I should like to meet one." But I doubt if I should have said that if I had been outside those solid stone walls.

"Perhaps you will hear them talking when you go through the Wood of the Ora," said a woman whose three-year-old daughter was going to sleep in her lap.

"Very few people have seen them," said the coffee maker[1], licking a cigarette and placing his left hand on his heart as he offered it to me. I fitted it into my cigarette holder; he lifted a burning twig from the fire and lighted it. "Now my father was accompanied by an ora all his life, but he was the only one who saw it, and he told no one about it until just before he died."

"Did he ever talk with her?"

"No, but she always walked before him on every safe trail. He was sixteen when he first saw her; he was watching the goats in the mountains. She appeared before him, standing on the trail. He said that he knew at once that she was not of our kind, because she was so beautiful. She was about twelve years old, wearing clothing not like ours, but of a white and shining material —my father said that it was like mist and it was like silk and it was like fire, but he could not say what it was like. Her hair was golden. She stood on the trail and with her hand she made a sign to him to stop, and he stopped, and they looked at each other for a long time. Then he spoke to her, but she did not answer. She was not there. And my father went on, and found on the trail he would have taken a great rock that had just fallen, and he knew that the ora had saved his life.

"He came home, and said nothing. The next morning when he went out with the goats the ora was waiting outside the door, and she went before him all that day. Always after that, whenever he left the house, she went before him on the trails.

1[at house of Marke Gjonni -- Analyst]

PEAKS OF SHALA

776 "My father was a strong man and very wise; he married and had many children; he fought the Turks and the Austrians and the Serbs and the Italians. He had a good life. But he never went anywhere unless the ora went before him. In the morning when he left the house, if she was not there he returned and sat by the fire that day. Often on the trails he was with many people, but none but him ever saw the ora. She remained always the same, always the size of a twelve-year-old child, always very beautiful, shining white and with golden hair.

"When she turned aside on the trail, my father turned also, and the people did as he did, though he did not say why. My father was known as a very wise man. Many times he saved the lives of many people by following the ora."

Several of the older men in the intently listening circle shook their heads, as though they remembered this, and when I asked them with my eyes they said, "*Po! Po!*" which means, "Yes."

776
763 "When my father[1] was sixty-five years old, strong and healthy, one day the ora did not come. She did not come the next day, nor the next, nor the next, for many days. Then my father knew that she would not come again and that it was his time to die. So he arranged all his affairs and died. Just before he died he told us about the ora; he told us so that we would know why he was making ready for death, and it was because his ora had left him."

[1] [coffee makers at house of [64] Marke Gjonni--Andy St]

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

CHAPTER V

THE UNEARTHLY MARRIAGE OF THE MAN OF IPEK —FIRST NIGHT IN A NATIVE ALBANIAN HOUSE.

THERE was a moment of contemplative 000 silence. Beyond the circle of firelight the goats still tore and worried the dried leaves from the oak branches. A woman came leisurely forward and put an iron pan on the coals. When it was hot she brought scraps of pork and laid them in it. Rexh, the little Mohammedan, turned his head so that he should not smell that unclean meat. Frances said to Perolli, in a ravenous voice, “How much longer will it be before we can eat?”

He looked at her reprovingly. “In Albania it [576] is not polite to care about food.”

“But it’s past midnight and we’ve had nothing to eat since noon!” Frances mourned.

“Slowly, slowly, little by little,” said Perolli, soothingly. For myself, I curled more comfortably among the blankets, too contented to ask for anything at all. It was as though I had returned to a place that I knew long ago and found myself at home there. I had forgotten that these people are living still in the childhood of the Aryan race and that I am the daughter of a century that is, to them, in the far and unknown

000 future. Twenty-five centuries had vanished, for me, as though they had never been.

776 "That lady ora was no doubt betrothed to one of her own people," said a man who had not previously spoken. "Now in my lost country of Ipek—may the Serbs who are murdering her feel our teeth in their throats!—I know a man who was married to an ora."

[291] A woman, barefooted, wearing a skirt of heavy black and white wool, a wide, silver-studded leather belt and a blouse of sheer white, her two thick black braids of hair falling from beneath a crimson headkerchief almost to her knees, came out of the shadows beyond the fire and lowered from her shoulder a beautifully shaped wooden jar of water. She held it braced against her hip, and, stooping, poured a thin stream over our outstretched hands. We laved them, the water sinking into the ashes around the fire, and another woman handed us each a towel of hand-woven red-and-
[262] white-plaided linen. Then we sat expectantly, but only a wooden bowl of cheese was set on the floor before us.

It was goat's-milk cheese, rather like the cottage cheese of home, except that it was hard, cut in cubes, and of an acrid, sourish flavor. We each took a piece, nibbled it.

400 "Oh, Perolli, can't you tell them we're starving? It's almost one o'clock in the morning!" cried Frances, pathetically.

"Be patient," said Perolli. "How many times must I say that it isn't polite in Albania to be so 000 greedy?"

"But it's eleven hours since any of us had a bite!" Frances protested. "Don't tell me Cheremi and our other men aren't starving."

"Albanians don't care so much about food," said Perolli. "I'm not hungry." He lit another cigarette, and, seeing the circle of politely incurious but keen eyes fixed on us, I said, "Tell them that we are very much interested in the story about the ora, and that we want to hear about the man who married one." And I surreptitiously prodded Alex, who, sitting bolt upright with her eyes open, was obviously asleep with fatigue.

The man who had spoken of that unearthly 776 marriage rolled and licked a cigarette, offered it to Alex with his hand on his heart, rolled himself another, lighted both with a blazing twig, settled comfortably on his heels, and began.

"This man was my friend, well known to me and to all the families of Ipek. A strong man, a good fighter, and respected by all. But his life was not complete, for the girl his father had chosen for him had died, and he was not married. There were many girls he might have had, girls of Montenegro and even of Shala and Shoshi and Kossova, but he said that he did not wish to marry. He came to his thirty-seventh year and was not married.

"One night he was sitting alone in his house, making a cup of coffee in the ashes of the fire, when the door opened. He looked, and there was

776 a woman who had come out of the darkness. She was no woman of our tribe, nor of any other tribe of man, though she was dressed like our women. My friend looked at her and said to himself that he had never known women could be so beautiful. Men could be as beautiful as that, yes, but not women. And he knew, though he did not know how he knew, that she was not of our kind.

"He said to her, 'Long life to you!' and she replied, 'And to you long life!' She came and sat by his fire, and he gave her the cup of coffee one gives a guest. She drank it and returned the cup to him, saying, 'Good trails to your feet!' Then they looked at each other for some time without speaking.

"Then she said to him, 'Am I not beautiful?' And he said, 'Yes.' She said to him, 'Have you ever seen a woman more beautiful?' And he said, 'No.' And after she had been silent for a long time she said to him, 'Will you marry me?' And he said, 'No.'

"She said to him, 'Do you think you will find a woman more beautiful than I?' He looked at her between the eyes and said, 'I know that I shall never see a woman so beautiful.' She said, 'Then will you marry me?' And he said, 'No.'

"'Why will you not marry me?' she asked, and he said, 'I do not wish to marry.' So for a time they sat silent, and then she said, 'Do not forget me,' and went away.

"He told me these things, and I said to him, 'She was an ora.' He said, 'Yes, I know.' I said,

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

'Was she a gypsy ora?' For, as you know, there 776 are two kinds of ora, and if she were a gypsy ora I would have been troubled for my friend. He said, 'No, she was a lady ora.' We spoke no more about it.

"Three years went by, to a day, and again it happened that my friend was sitting alone in his house, making a cup of coffee in the ashes of the fire, when again the door opened."

The man of Ipek stopped speaking, opened his [276] silver tobacco box, and put a pinch of the long, fine, golden tobacco on a cigarette paper. He spread it carefully, twisted it into the cone shape of the Albanian cigarette, glanced at us to see that none of our cigarette holders were empty, and placed the white slender cone between his lips. He lighted it and drew several deliberate puffs. No one spoke. There was the red circle of firelight, the graceful black and white and colored figures huddled close to it, around us the shadows of the house, and beyond them the vast, murmurous blackness of the night and the mountains; the chill and mystery of them seemed to be pressing against the stone walls that kept them out, and the sound of the waterfall was like the sighing breaths of strange, wild things.

"My friend was sitting by his fire, like this, but he was alone. It was the third coming of that day of the year on which the ora had come out of the darkness, and when again the door opened he knew, without turning to see, who it was.

776 “She came in, and he turned and said, ‘Long life to you!’ Then he saw that with her was a manservant, and that manservant was of her own kind. She said to my friend, ‘And to you long life!’ She sat by the fire, and he gave her coffee, and she drank, and the manservant stood in the shadows behind them.

“‘Have you forgotten me?’ she said, and my friend said, ‘No.’ They looked at each other, and she said, ‘Am I not beautiful?’ And he said, ‘Yes.’ Then she leaned close to him and said, ‘Will you marry me?’ And he said, ‘No.’

“When he said that she rose, and she was more beautiful angry than she had been before. She said: ‘Come with me. My father wishes to see you.’

“He said, ‘What have I to do with your father?’

“She said, ‘Come with me.’

“My friend did not know why he went, or how he went, or where he went. They came to a place in the mountains, but it was a strange place, and strange mountains—my friend could not describe that place. It was a place in our mountains, but such a place as no man had ever seen. There were trees that were alive; it was all my friend could say. There were many souls of trees about him, and they were ora, and among them was their king, who is the king of the ora. He stood before the king of the ora.

“The king looked at him and said, ‘Will you marry my daughter?’ And he said, ‘No.’

PEAKS OF SHALA

"The king said to him: 'My daughter has 776 seen you. My daughter wishes to be your wife. She will be a good wife to you. She will bring you great happiness. She is my daughter, a lady ora.'

"My friend said: 'I thank you. Your daughter is very beautiful and very good. But I do not wish to marry.'

"The king of the ora said, 'If you will marry my daughter you will have all the heart desires. I will make you rich in the things that men call riches in the Land of the Eagle.'

"My friend said: 'I am a poor man. I am not a bey of the south, of the land of the Toshk, but I am a Gheg, a man of the mountains. All that I need I earn with my hands, and that is enough. I do not wish to marry.'

"Then the king of the ora rose, and he was not angry, but he was very terrible. He said, 'Marry my daughter.'

"And my friend married his lady daughter."

The man of Ipek seemed to think that the story was ended. But I, who had been scribbling all this down in my notebook, hidden in the shadow of Rexh, as Perolli translated it to me paragraph by paragraph, did not agree with him at all. "What happened?' I wanted to know.

"Nothing happened. His family came into the empty house and he was gone, leaving his gun on the wall and the empty coffee cup by the dead ashes of the fire. They were very much

776 afraid. My friend had not told any man but me about the visit of the ora three years before, and I said nothing. Some days went over the tops of the mountains, and no one knew where he had gone. Then he came back, and brought with him his wife, the ora."

The rest I got by questions.

"No one could see her except my friend," said the man of Ipek. "No one but he ever saw her. He built himself a beautiful house; there were rugs in it, and tables of carved wood, and bowls of copper and silver—all things that are beautiful. Cigarette holders of amber and silver with jeweled bowls, and sashes and turbans of silk, and cushions of silk, and beautiful jars for bringing water from the springs. All kinds of rich and beautiful things, and always great quantities of delicate and rich foods. The men of Ipek remember that house well.

"Yes, my friend is dead now. He lived in happiness with his wife for twenty years, and they had children whom he loved. But only he could see them, for to others they were invisible, like his wife. I have been in his house many times when she was there, but I never saw her. Others say they have seen strange things in that house; they have seen things moved by hands they could not see. But I never saw that. Only I know that my friend was happy with his wife and children. She was a lady ora, and kept his house well. The gypsy ora are dirty folk, but the lady ora love cleanliness and order. Everyone respected my friend and his lady wife. 776 Whenever he entered a village, all guns were fired in his honor, for men said, 'The man who married a lady ora is coming into the village.' Oh, it was all very well known in Ipek, among the people of my tribe who are now slaves to the cursed Serbs.

"When he died, no doubt she went back to her own people, taking their children with her. His family came to take back his house, and they found all manner of beautiful things, but no money. No money anywhere."

"What do you think of it?" I said to Frances. 000 "Do you believe —— Great Scott! Of course it isn't true! I don't know what's wrong with my mind. Men don't marry tree spirits. It's absurd."

But, frankly, my conviction was that of the man who whistles cheerfully while passing a graveyard at night, because, of course, he does not believe in ghosts.

"There's some natural explanation," said Alex. "The man went away for some reason—perhaps he actually had found some of the treasure they say is buried in these mountains—and when he came back he invented the story to account for it."

"But he had told this man about seeing the ora three years earlier."

"Well, they're a very patient people. Perhaps he waited three years after he found the treasure before he dug it up."

000 "I should say they're patient!" cried Frances. "Perolli, if you don't tell them we are simply dying of hunger, I will! It's almost two o'clock in the morning. Do they think we are made of—cast iron? I want something to eat, and I want to go to sleep. Do they intend to talk until morning?"

[576] [521] "It is the custom, when strangers come, to talk to them," said Perolli, severely. "Their only way of hearing news, and their only entertainment, is talking to guests. If you want to be rude about eating and sleeping, go ahead; I won't."

"Oh, all right," Frances relented, sadly. "Perolli, do you believe in ora?"

"Well—do you believe in heaven and hell, and God and the devil? There are lots of things in the world that you don't see or touch. I don't know——" He said, briskly, "Of course I don't believe in ora!" He wavered again. "But when you know so many people who have seen them and talked with them—I mean, who think they have—— Everyone used to believe such things, long ago, and perhaps, here in these mountains, where the people have changed so little through all the centuries, there may still be things—spirits, phantoms, whatever you like to call them. Understand, I don't believe it. But there may be something in that myth that's part of every religion, that there was a time when there were other beings on earth besides men. And if there were once, why then, if we could still see them, they must still be—— But of course ooo it must be all imagination."

"And there was that sound we heard. I never heard anything like it before. Perolli, you said it was an ora."

He looked badgered. "I meant, whatever it was, it is what these people call an ora."

"Do the ora ever come into this village?" I 776 demanded at large.

"We hear them in the village at night," said the coffee maker, quite casually, as he measured a spoonful of brown powder into the tiny pot. "No, we never see them. They call to us, and when we answer they talk, but we cannot understand their language. Always when we speak to them they answer in their own tongue."

"But, Cheremi, you heard them talking about your cousin's death," I said.

"We hear them talking together sometimes, yes," said the coffee maker. "If you go through the Wood of the Ora at twilight you will often hear them talking in some language you will understand—in Persian or Arabic or Greek or Albanian. Then if you listen perhaps you will hear them speak of you or of some one you know. But if you speak to them, they will be silent, and then they will go on talking together in their own language, which no man understands. It is no doubt the old language of the trees."

"But you cut the trees," said Alex.

"Yes," I cried, struck by it. "You cut all the

776 branches off the trees. Doesn't it cripple or hurt the ora?"

"The ora is a spirit," said the man of Ipek. "You cannot hurt a pure spirit that has no body. Ora are spirits of the forests, but they are not part of the trees. I understand it, but I do not say it very well. Even if you cut down a tree you do not kill the ora. An ora does not live, an ora simply is."

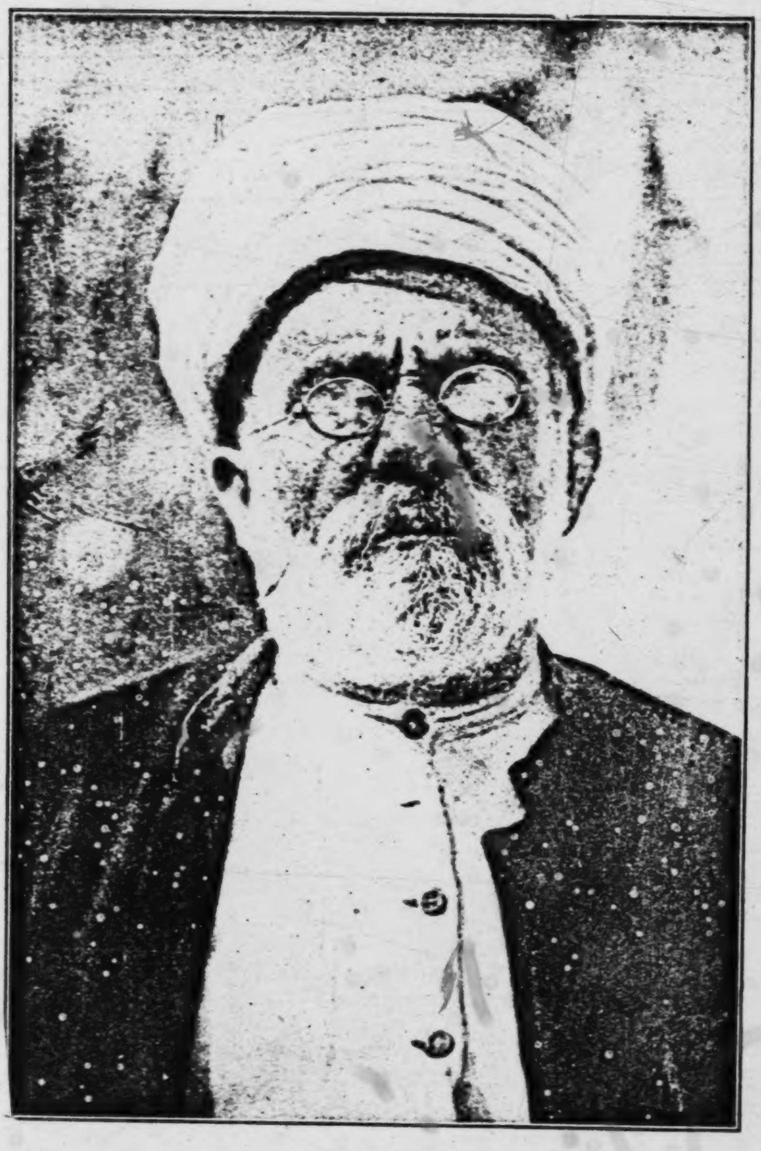
000 We were interrupted by Cheremi, who approached, knelt mysteriously by Perolli's side, and whispered. Perolli turned to us. "Our dinner is delayed," he said, "because they can find nothing to give to Rexh. They have only pork in the house, and they have sent through all the village and cannot find any eggs or goat's meat. A boy has gone now, over the mountains to the next village, to get something they can offer a Mohammedan. You see, their flocks were destroyed when the Serbs retreated through here, and if they kill one of the two sheep for us, it means losing the lambs next year."

"But, Miss Hardy, I can eat corn bread. That is all I need," said Rexh, earnestly.

"We can't tell them that now. We should have thought of it sooner," said Perolli. "We must wait at least until the boy comes back."

"Oh, my sainted grandmother!" cried poor Frances. "Aren't we going to have any dinner at all till breakfast time?"

"Is it because we are guests that our hosts are taking all this trouble to give Rexh the food a



AN ALBANIAN HODJI OF THE MATI

(76a)

000 Mohammedan can eat?" I asked. "They're Roman Catholics, aren't they? Shouldn't we have brought a Mohammedan into their house?"

"Oh, that makes no difference," said Perolli. 798 "One religion or another—all religions are the same in the sight of God. Mohammedan or Catholic, we are all human, we all respect one another. No, our hosts don't mind the trouble; they're only sorry that they have nothing but pork in the house."

"What would happen, Rexh, if you ate pork without knowing it?" said I.

[262] "Nothing, Mrs. Lane. Nothing would happen even if I ate it, knowing I was doing it. But for me it is wrong to eat pork, so I would never do that. For these others," he explained, carefully, looking very serious and very twelve-year-old, "it is not wrong to eat pork. It is not the pork itself that matters, Mrs. Lane. It is doing what is wrong that matters. See"—he sat up, making his points gravely with straight forefinger—"some things are wrong for the Catholics to do; they are right for me. I can have nine wives, but the Catholics can have only one. They can eat pork, but that is wrong for me. There are many things like that. Each must do what he thinks is right. It does not matter what it is. Men think differently. But God knows whether they do what seems right to them. And in the end we all go to the same heaven, if we have been good."

"Goodness, Rexh!" I murmured, feebly. I

*[Rexh = Mohammedan -- Analyst]

798 ask you, is that the talk you would expect between Mohammedan and Catholic in the Near East? What about massacres, and holy wars, and all that?

"What about them?" said Perolli, when I asked him. "They may be in Asia Minor—though, myself, I think religion hasn't much to do with the fighting between Christian and Turk. But we don't have them in Albania. We are all Albanians, first. And second, the Virgin Mary is the mother of all good people, Mohammedan or Catholic. Why should we fight each other?"

And he told of Italy's attempt to block Albania's entry into the League of Nations by asserting that the people were Mohammedan, and of the Albanian Mohammedans' quiet retort in sending to Geneva a delegation led by an archbishop followed by I forget how many bishops. Then he told about the people in Kossova, who are both Catholic and Mohammedan, going to the mosque by day and attending mass by night; that is because they were conquered by the Turks, who told them they must become followers of Mohammed. "Very well," they said, since it made little difference to them. But then the priests told them that they must not forsake the Church. "Very well," they said again. And they are called in Albania a word which means, "half-and-half."

000 "All that is not important," said Perolli, his attention wandering, for the group around the

fire began to talk Albanian politics. Behind his casually cheerful brown eyes I saw many things stirring, and I lay back, staring up at the smoke beneath the roof and wondering what was in all the hidden minds around me. Did our hosts suspect that Perolli was part of the new, distrusted Tirana government? Why, really, was he in these mountains? Was it truly only a vacation, and was he taking his life in his hands and wandering along the edge of the Serbian armies' lines merely for pleasure? What were the real thoughts of these barbaric-looking men, these men with shaved heads and scalp locks hidden beneath their turbans, as question and answer and argument went back and forth across the fire?

They were talking in perhaps six languages; not everyone there understood all those tongues, and subtle conversations beneath conversations were going on; this man dropping into Italian for a phrase, that one into a dialect of Samarkand or northern India. And there was one man who persistently talked Serbian to Perolli—that language, at least, I could recognize, and I could see him growing restive under it, trying to take the talk into Albanian instead.

The children who were still awake sat soberly listening, not speaking, but gathering it all into their minds, turning their eyes from speaker to speaker as the languages changed, puzzled a little, trying to understand. And I realized how Albanian children get their education.

666 "We'd be saying: 'Run away and play, dear. This isn't for children,'" I commented.

"We wouldn't," said Frances. "They'd have been in bed six hours ago. How on earth do they live to grow up?"

"Heaven knows. But aren't they strong and beautiful when they do!"

"It's all right," said Perolli, aside. "They're talking about the French—whether France will become enough afraid of Jugo-Slavia to side with Italy down here. They aren't for or against the Tirana government; they don't exactly understand it, but they're waiting to find out. They don't know who I am. Don't be worried."

And at last dinner appeared. It was exactly half past two in the morning.

Most of the children—they had had no supper at all, so far as we could determine—were going to sleep, collapsing in soft little heaps where they sat beside the fire. Various women of the household lifted them tenderly, carried them to the farther corner of the house, near the goats, and laid them in a row on the floor. There, covered head and foot with heavy, tucked-in blankets, they continued to sleep.

264
574 Meantime the table was brought for us.[1] It was a large round piece of wood, raised on little legs perhaps five inches from the floor. We sat about it, comfortably cross-legged on our blankets, and before each of us was laid a large chunk of corn bread broken from the flat loaf. In the

[1] [At Marke Gjonni's house. For detailed account of visit, see cat. 116, pp. 54-86 -- Analyst]

center of the table was set a wooden bowl filled with pieces of pork. 264 574

"Don't!" said Perolli, quickly, restraining our famished gestures. "In Albania it is not good manners to be eager to eat." So we sat wretched for some moments, savoring the delicious odor of food that we must not touch, and politely making conversation with our hosts, who still sprawled in graceful attitudes about the fire. Then, with slow and indifferent movements, we fished out bits of the meat with our fingers, and ate.

It was delicious, the lean meat, stripped of every scrap of fat and broiled on sticks over a wood fire. We ate eagerly, biting first the meat, then a morsel of corn bread, coarse, made without leavening, but sweet and nutty. The smallest crumb of it must not be scattered on table or floor; when one fell, Perolli instructed us to pick it up and kiss it. We should also have made the sign of the cross, for bread is sacred in these mountains. Since we were not Catholics, that omission might be overlooked. But we must pick up the crumb and kiss it; to have ignored it would have been scandal.

"In Albania," said Perolli, "it is etiquette to leave a great deal of the food." And while we were still starving, after fourteen hours of hunger, he ordered the dish away.

After that, another wooden bowl filled with cubes of the fat pork, fried crisp. Rexh[1] sitting a little apart, soberly ate his piece of corn bread,

---

[1] [A Mohammedan boy -- Analyst]

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

264 574 for not even in the next village had the messenger been able to find eggs or goat's meat.

When this second course was removed, fresh water was again brought to wash our hands, while the table was removed to a little distance. Then I saw why it was courteous to leave food, for all the villagers who had come in to see us gathered around this second table. And when they had finished and all had washed their hands—it was now past three in the morning—the table was again moved, and the family ate, men and women together, chatting and daintily dipping into the common dish.

000 "Do you think, Perolli," said Frances, "that we could go to bed now?" And she looked enviously at Alex, who sat stony eyed, upright, and fast asleep.

"Oh, surely!" said Perolli. "They'll understand that you're tired." And he explained this to our hosts, who nodded, smiling. So Cheremi and Rexh spread our blankets more smoothly on the floor, and we lay down in a row, our heads on our saddlebags, and pulled another blanket over us.

For a time the others sat by the fire and talked; one roasted coffee over the coals in a long-handled pan, and then ground it in a cylinder of brass. The warm brown smell of it and the sound of grinding kept coming through my daze of fatigue. Then one by one they lay down, covering their heads with blankets; the fire died to a fading glow of coals; there was no sound except the incessant tinkling of the goats' bells 000 and the crunching and tearing of the dried oak branches which they munched.

"My first night in a native Albanian house," I thought, and the next instant, it seemed to me, I started awake. The room was full of movement and talk. It was still dark, but in the farther corner a gray, slanting block of light came through the open door; smoke curled and twisted in it. The fire was blazing; near it a man knelt, making coffee. All around him men stood, twisting tighter their long colored sashes; the rifles on their backs stood upward at every angle. Then I saw the goats and sheep going one by one through the block of gray light; a boy followed them, rifle on back and staff in hand, and I realized that it was morning.

I looked at my wrist watch, whose radium dial shone in the darkness. Half past five. The man who was making coffee smiled at me. "Long may you live!" said he, warmly, offering me the tiny cup with one hand, the other on his heart. As in a nightmare I struggled to reach it, and made my stiff lips say, "And to you long life!"

Perolli sat up quickly, wide awake as an aroused animal. "Good morning!" said he, happily. "Time to get up!"

Rain was still sluicing down from a gray sky; every rock in the interminable ranges of mountain peaks seemed to be the source of a foaming stream. Frances, Alex, and I, with our toilet cases in our hands, made our way along the side

060 of a cliff to a waterfall, knelt on the dripping rocks beside it, and washed and brushed our teeth. The woman who accompanied us watched us with interest, and exclaimed, while we showed her the tooth-paste tubes, the tooth brushes in their cases, the cakes of soap, the jars of cold cream, the strange machine-made Turkish toweling, and the white combs. Even to ourselves they seemed exotic luxuries. How many curious things we have invented for the care of our bodies, since the days when we lived as the mountain Albanians still live.

"And at that," I said, enviously, "I wish I had her complexion!" The woman stood by the waterfall, as graceful as a cat, strong limbed, clear eyed, fine skinned, and her bare feet in the cold water were joys to the eye, slim, beautifully formed, arched, with almond nails and a rose-marble color. True, her face and hands were grimy with wood smoke, and ours, when we looked at one another, set us off into exhausting laughter.

"My house is clean," said the woman as she watched us scrubbing and scrubbing again. "There are no lice in it."

"Now I wonder where she got that idea?" said Alex. "I thought they thought lice were healthy."

Frances asked questions in Albanian. Yes, this house had kept for a time a refugee child on his way from the American house in Scutari to the lands of his tribe, and he had insisted on washing his bed and his clothes; he had hated 000 lice with an astonishing hatred; he said they were small devils who would grow to be large devils, and the woman did not think this was true, but she had washed all the beds, also all the house, and now it was like an American house and had no lice.

"But that isn't what she meant. She meant that she doesn't see why we are washing," said Alex, lifting her dripping face above a pool and rubbing it with one hand. It isn't easy to wash in a waterfall, with no place to lay the soap.

"We do this every morning," Frances explained in Albanian. "It is American custom." The woman looked as though she thought it rather foolish, still, if it were the custom——

"Also," said Frances, "every morning we wash the children and the babies, all over, from head to foot."

"Yes?" said the woman, indifferently. "Here [854] babies stay in their cradles. Children go into the water when they are old enough to swim. Then only in the summer, when it is not cold."

Frances gave it up. We came back from the waterfall, on a path that was like a terrace of heaven overlooking all the world of mountains and valleys and swirling clouds. We were already wet to the skin with rain, but that did not matter, for we had before us the day's walking in it, and our indifference to wet clothes and feet was already quite Albanian. And the morning, and the mountain air, and the water-gushing

PEAKS OF SHALA

ooorange after range of mountains, seemed to us glorious. We thought that it would be fun to herd goats among these peaks and to live forever in a stone house with a fire on the floor and a pan of corn bread baking in the coals. No dusting, for there was no furniture; no making of beds, for there were no beds; no curtains to keep fresh, for there were no windows; no trouble with clothes, for centuries saw no change in fashions; no work except hand weaving and embroidery and the washing of linen in a brook. No haste, no worry, no struggle to invent new needs that one must struggle to satisfy. All that simplicity and leisure our ancestors traded for a rug on the floor, a trinket-covered dressing table, for knives and forks and kitchen ranges, fountain pens and high white collars and fashion books. It seemed to us, on that morning, a trade in which we had been cheated.

And even now I wonder, sometimes, about the value of the centuries that have given us civilization.

We had no doubt at all about their worthlessness that morning, when we set out again—after a cup of Turkish coffee, each—to walk another twenty miles over the Albanian mountains, through the Wood of the Ora and the tribal lands of Plani and over the Chafa Bosheit to the next village.

CHAPTER VI

THE SONG OF THE FLIGHT OF MARKE GJLOSHI—THE HUNTED MAN OF SHOSHI — THE WAY THROUGH THE WOOD OF THE ORA—A WOMAN WHO BELIEVES IN PRIVATE PROPERTY.

FOUR men of Marke Gjonni's household 000
went with us to carry the packs, so we left the stone house peaceful on the cliff below our upward-climbing path, not disturbing it with any parting volley when we paused for our last glimpse of it. A faint haze of blue smoke hung over it, seeping through the slates of the roof; there was no other sign of life about it, and only the smoke distinguished it from the natural rocks. Beside us the stream, which was the waterfall, roared and glittered in the sunlight as it fell into the depths; following with our gaze its narrowing ribbon of silver and searching for the blue smoke haze, we found the house, and I would have had Cheremi fling down to it the keen high call of farewell, ended by six times three shots, that we had sent back to the bishop.

But no; there were only women left in the [576]
house, and how could I be so crude as to imagine that one greeted women with rifle-shots?

We went on for a time over sunshiny uplands, and I remember that day as a succession of sun

000 and shower, of small grassy plateaus and quick dips down cliffsides, and struggles up again, beside and through waterfalls that drenched the rocks with spray for yards around. Our muscles were now accustomed to the exercise; they complained hardly at all, and with occasional pauses for rest beneath the wooden crosses set at long intervals along the trail we went gayly, accompanied by the shrill songs of the men.

"Marke Gjloshi is putting on his jacket," sang the leading man.

533 539 "Marke Gjloshi is putting on his jacket," repeated Cheremi, for this was a song he knew well, a song of Shala made in the days of the Turks, and, repeating each line alternately, they sang:

"Marke Gjloshi is putting on his jacket.
He goes to the Pasha and makes complaint:
'The Mohammedan has cursed the cross of my Christ!
He has cursed it, and I draw my pistol,
My death-spitting pistol, I draw it
And blow him to bits. He is scattered,
He is scattered like leaves on the rocks.'
The Pasha is angry, the Pasha is crazy,
The Pasha goes mad and the bugles blow
And the guns are out, the gendarmes are out!
Marke Gjloshi is away on the road,
Away on the road a long way,
All the long way through the six tribes.
The Arabian Sea stops him, the Arabs stop him,
Arabs of the sandy sea, black Arabs.
There he stands, there he fights with the gendarmes.
'O Marke Gjloshi, what will you tell the nations?
What will you tell the Five Nations?'

'I will tell the consuls the Sultan is to blame, 533
I will tell to God the Sultan is to blame. 539
But they will not free me,
But they will not let me go
Back to my tribe, back to my own tribe.
They tear me in pieces, they send me far away,
Far away to the other side of the sea.
My greetings, my greetings, to the lost six tribes!'"

So in the mountains they sing the tales of the men who have been driven from them, to become khedives of Egypt, pashas, themselves, of Turkey, political leaders in Italy, great surgeons of France. From all these countries men are coming back now to make the new free government of Albania, and here among the mountaineers we were walking with Perolli, an agent of this government, who dared not say who he was, for danger of death.

"I ask myself sometimes why God did not 000 make me born in a happier land," said Perolli, as we looked out over scores of miles of valleys inclosed by the sky-touching mountains, dotted meagerly with the tiny stone houses. "But then I think, He has made me an Albanian, and given me the most beautiful and the most unhappy land in all the world, for His own purposes."

And he spoke of roads through these mountains, railroads, mines, great power plants, all feeding the people, giving them comforts and luxuries and knowledge. For all of Albania, beneath six feet of upper soil, belongs to the government, as well as all the water power, and we

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

000 walked on, seeing even with our untrained eyes that the "white coal" of those thousand streams is enough to turn every wheel in a reorganized Europe, and dreaming—dreams that will never be realized.

627 Then we saw the men stopping on the trail ahead, stopping with quick hands on their rifles, and, remembering in a strange kind of panic that
[576 no one could be killed in the presence of a woman, I flung myself gasping up the slope, crying with my last half breath, "Long may you live!" to two strange men who appeared before us.

Then I collapsed, panting, on a grassy knoll, and dimly through my dizzy eyes I saw that the men, relaxing gladly, were sitting down around me and taking out their silver tobacco boxes.

"A Shoshi man," said Perolli, "with one of Pultit. I don't just get it; something to do with the blood feud. Let me listen."

We sat on the grassy knoll that seemed to be the edge at the end of the world, so far below it the valleys lay, and listened while the men of the tribes that were "in blood" talked easily together of unimportant matters and offered one another cigarettes.

The Shoshi man had taken off his turban and wore on his handsome head only the tiny round white cap, hardly larger than the curved palm of a hand, that covered his scalp lock. Around its edges the hair was shaved clean to the skull, and with his weather-browned face and scarlet sash bristling with knives he looked altogether the savage.

PEAKS OF SHALA

He was an exile from his own tribe, we learned. 627
A man of the tribe had killed this man's brother in a quarrel over irrigation water; the chief men of the tribe had called a council and deplored the murder, condemning the murderer to pay ten thousand kronen to the murdered man's family. This had been done, but the brother rebelled against the decision. Blood could be paid for only in blood, he declared; such was the ancient Law of Lec, and who were the men of these young centuries, that they should set aside that law? Therefore he had shot and killed the man who had killed his brother, and, sending his wife to the chiefs to return the ten thousand kronen, he had fled to the house of a friend in Pultit.

Now it is the law that when the chiefs of a tribe take council together and arrive at a decision, they must consult all the members of the tribe involved in that decision; when they all agree to it, it must be carried out. The honor of the chiefs is involved. If any party to the agreement breaks it, then all the chiefs, together and separately, with all masculine members of their families, must not rest until they kill that man and clear their honor. So seven chiefs of Shoshi, with all their sons and brothers, were hunting this Shoshi man.

"As it should be," said one of our men, judicially, and quoted their proverb, "A goat is tied by the horns, a man by his word."

"That may be," said the Shoshi man, retorting with another, "but 'where the tooth aches

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

627 the tongue will go.' This matter was a sore tooth to me, and I had no sleep until I killed that man who killed my brother. As to the money, I have returned it. Money will not buy my brother's blood."

The men fell silent, smoking. "But why hasn't he been killed before now?" I demanded of Perolli, when their words had been translated to me.

"He is traveling with his friend, the man of Pultit," said Perolli. "He is under that man's protection. If the chiefs of Shoshi kill him, they will be in blood with the tribe of Pultit, whose hospitality they will have violated. Shoshi is already in blood with Shala, and——"

I exclaimed aloud. The endless complexities of the laws of these supposedly lawless people were too much for me. It was almost as bewildering as our own courts.

"Meantime," said Perolli, "the chiefs have torn down this man's house, and that would make it seem that they will reach some peaceful settlement."

"Would it?" said I.

"Of course. For if they meant not to stop until they killed him they would not have destroyed his house. I think that they will hold another council and simply banish him from the tribe and from the mountains."

"But if he does not go?"

"Oh, then, of course, they would really have to kill him. And of course they must kill him now, if they meet him. But as long as the man 627 of Pultit is with him, they will try not to meet him."

"So," said I, "wherever there are laws there are ways of getting around them. And," I continued, remembering, "these men of ours would have to be killing him now, if I were not here?"

"Certainly," said Perolli. "Our Shala men would have to, because Shala is in blood with Shoshi, and this is a Shoshi man."

"Even when his own chiefs are hunting him? Even if he were banished from the tribe?"

"Well, one doesn't stop to ask that. He wears the Shoshi braiding on his trousers."

"I see," said I, and after we had rested and talked and smoked together for some time, the Shoshi man rose leisurely to go. The man of Pultit rose instantly, with him, and each cast a searching glance over the valley before them. Then they hitched more comfortably over their shoulders the woven woolen straps that held their rifles, ran an alert hand over the knives and pistols in their sashes, threw away the butts of their cigarettes.

"Long life to you," they said, politely.

"And to you long life," we responded. "Go on a smooth trail."

In a moment the last glimpse of their heads 000 had disappeared as they made their way down the steep path. The forest was very still, the sunlight on the wet rocks very golden, and for a hundred miles the mountains stretched into day voice that was like a ray of daylight in a cave, "it's simple enough. These cliffs repeat far-away echoes, and that's how the superstition started."

"One can explain everything," said Frances.

"And then explain the explanations," said I.

"And still most of the learning of every age seems to consist in proving most of the learning of the other ages wrong," said Frances.

"Do you mean you actually believe that there are ora?" said Alex. "All these stories of people who have seen people who have seen them—I'd like to see one myself."

"And if you see one, it doesn't prove that it exists," said I. "We see a great many things that don't exist—and don't see a great many that do.

"How can you prove that anything exists? Only by common belief. I once had a letter from a man in an insane asylum, who wrote to ask if Art Smith, an aviator I knew, saw in the upper air the shapes that he did. Art Smith never had; I didn't even bother to ask him. But if Art Smith had seen them, and all other aviators had seen them, we would believe that they existed; they would exist, and the man would be sane, because he would believe as all the rest of us did. How do we know there are air currents five thousand feet from the earth? Because everyone who has been there has felt them. How do we know there are subtler currents that carry wireless messages? Because everyone who uses a wireless uses them. How do we know that there are ora in the Albanian mountains? Because all the Albanians who live here have heard them, and many have seen them. If we say there are no ora we will be crazy, by the standards of these men. Or simply foolishly ignorant. What do we think of an Albanian when he tells us that the power in a waterfall cannot be carried invisibly on a wire?"

"Do you believe there are ora?" said Alex.

"No," I said, "I don't. But human beings began life on this planet among spirits and demons; they knew they were there, they saw them and heard them and arranged their lives by them; therefore, by any measurement we know, spirits and demons existed. Here in the Albanian mountains they still exist. We live among electric currents and ether waves and X-rays and radium; we see them or use them; they exist. They exist for us and not for the Albanians; spirits and demons exist for the Albanians and not for us. And none of us can explain any of them; it is all mystery. Listen!"

We listened. All around us the trees seemed to be listening, too. From far away on a distant peak we heard the shrill, clear, infinitely fine sounds of a conversation, a conversation carried on from mountain to mountain, swinging like thin wires over the wide valley of the Lumi Shala. All around us the woods were perfectly silent, the cliffs were still; against that background of profound silence we heard a water drop falling from a rock, the delicate sound of 000 our breathing and of the blood in our ears.

"Which proves nothing, of course. The sound wasn't in the right direction; the echoes didn't work," said Alex.

"Yes," I said. "But I wish they had. It would have given us such delightfully shivery sensations."

So we came up out of the wood,[1] and over the next mountain, and there on a slope, where the dead grass was splotched with patches of rotting snow and the soft earth trodden by the sharp hoofs of goats, we came back with a jolt to problems of unquestioned reality. For we met a 423 woman, herding the goats, who believes in 578 private property.

She was a tall, dark-eyed woman, handsome, but not beautiful. Her face, as we say, was full of character; and there was independence, even a shade of defiance, in her bearing as she stood watching us approach, her chin up, her eyes cool and steady, one hand grasping a peeled branch as a staff, her ragged skirt strained against her by the wind that blew down from the mountain pass. Her thick, dark hair hung forward [777] over her shoulders in two braids, and from each dangled a charm of bright blue beads, defense against any demon she might meet in the mountains.

"Long life to you!" she said.

"And to you long life!" we replied, and, seeing her glance fall covetously on my cigarette—only

[1] [Wood of the Ora -- Analyst]

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

PEAKS OF SHALA

423 the swiftest flicker of a glance, it was—I offered
578 her one. She took it, thanked me, lighted it
from mine.

"A bold woman," said Perolli.

"Why?"

[562] "In these mountains[1] the women smoke, but
[576] not before men; that is a man's privilege, and
it is unwomanly to smoke in their presence. Are you a woman?" he asked her, in Albanian.

"A woman of Pultit, married in Shala. A widow with two children, demanding justice from my tribe," she said.

I looked about. There was nothing but snow and wet earth to sit on. Well, she must have been standing for hours, watching the goats. I leaned on my staff. "What justice?" said I.

She told us with a calm precision; none of her people's rhetorical flourishes. Even through the barrier of language I could see that she was stating her case as a lawyer might who was not addressing a jury.

She had been married five years; she was twenty-one years old. She had two children—boys. While she was married her husband had built a house. It was a large house; two rooms. She had helped her husband build that house. With her own hands she had laid the slate on the roof. She liked that house. She had lived in it four years. Now her husband had been killed by the Serbs and she wanted to keep that house. She wanted to live in it, alone, with her two children.

[1] [Albanian mountains-- [98] Analyst]

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

"But it is impossible!" said Perolli. "A large house, with two rooms, for one woman?" 423 578

By the Virgin Mary, she said, yes! She wanted that house; it was her house. She was going to have that house. She was not going to stop talking till she got that house.

"By Jove! I like her spirit!" said Frances. The woman stood looking from one to the other of us, defiant, superb.

"Well, but what's become of the house?" Alex demanded.

Her husband's brother, head of the family now, had taken it. He was living in it with his wife and children and brothers and cousins and —I forget exactly; seventeen of them in all. The family, which comprised all the village at the foot of the slope on which we stood, had decided that the house should be used for them. She and her children could live with them. But she would not do it. She wanted that house all for herself; she said again that it was her house. Until she got that house nothing would content her or keep her silent. Her sons she had sent to the priest's house in Plani—to the same "macaroni" who had refused us shelter. He had taken them in and promised to educate them for the priesthood. For herself, she remained in this village, clamoring for that house. If she got it before her sons were grown and married she would bring them back to live with her. She might do so, even when they were married. That did not matter;. what she wanted was the house, her house, all for herself.

423 572 "Well," said Perolli, "I pity the chiefs of that village."

"But where do you suppose she got the idea?"

"Heavens knows. Who can tell what women will think of?" said Perolli.

We left her standing on the cliff edge, still superb and still defiant, the cigarette in her hand and the blue beads twinkling at the ends of her braids. A bright scarlet handkerchief was twisted around her head, and her wide belt, thickly studded with silver nails, shone like armor. A picture of revolt, and I thought what a catastrophe she must be in the peaceful village to which, clinging and dropping from bowlder to bowlder, we were descending.

"Will we see her again?" I asked.

"Oh, she'll probably drop in during the evening. She looks like a woman who would," said Perolli.

361 The village was perhaps fifteen houses, clustered on flat land at the foot of the cliffs. Beyond it, a creamy blue flood swollen by the rains, the Lumi Shala ran straight between the mountain [32] ranges. A score of little streams, stone walled and crossed by tiny stone bridges, ran through the village, and all the land on which it stood was cut into odd-shaped pieces by many stone fences and raised channels of stone for irrigation water. Dropping down into that village was rather like being a very small gnat descending on a piece of half-made honeycomb.

000 All the earth was sodden with water; we sank

over shoe tops in it, and, wading the streams,ooo walking on fences, crossing the tiny bridges, we came to the house selected for us by the man we had sent ahead, were greeted with shouts and a volley of shots and ushered into the smoky, warm dusk where the house fire glimmered like a red eye.

Although this was our second night in a native house in the heart of the Albanian mountains, I cannot tell you how natural it seemed to us. It was as though we had always come home from the vast chill mountain twilight to a dark warm room where a fire smoldered on an earthen floor and the night was shut out by unbroken walls. It was as though we had always said, "Long may you live!" to our hosts and crouched comfortably, in steaming garments, beside the flames.

We drank the offered cups of sweet thick coffee, the large glasses of rakejia; Cheremi washed our feet; the dripping-wet goats and sheep were herded in through the open door and fell to munching dried leaves; the women nursed their babies, stooping above the painted gay cradles where the infants lay bound. It was all quite commonplace to us, and when, after an hour or so, Alex spoke of the stairway, she seemed for a moment to be a stranger coming from strange, unknown experiences.

"That stairway," said Alex, "is about eighth century. I saw one like it in Norway, preserved by the historical society. It was in a house like

000 this, too," she added, in a tone of surprise, as though she saw the house for the first time.

It was slightly different from the house of Marke Gjonni. The end where the goats were eating was shut off from the rest by a latticework of woven willow boughs, and high against the wall where we sat by the fire an inclosed platform of the same latticework hung like a huge bird's nest. It was reached by the stairway Alex had remarked—simply a slanting log, notched roughly into steps. Above the fire itself was another square of the interlaced branches, hung from the ceiling; the smoke rose and curled against it and made long velvety fringes of soot, and all around its edges were wooden pegs on which our coats were hung to dry and haunches of goat's meat were hung to smoke. From one of the pegs swung the basket of wrought iron holding slivers of blazing pitch pine; this was the lamp.

"Eighth century," I repeated, vaguely. "So we are living in the eighth century."

"Or earlier. Oh yes, surely earlier, for the house I saw must have been one of the last of its kind in Norway," said Alex. But we said no more about it, for centuries seemed unimportant then, and, indeed, we did not remember very clearly any newer ways of living; we were too comfortable where we were, like people coming home after a very short journey.

574 Perhaps ten men of the village had come in to see us;[1] several older and more dignified ones

---

[1] [A house in Albanian mountains -- Analyst]

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

whom we took to be chiefs, and some young ones, 574 and half a dozen boys, all moving gracefully as panthers, their white garments ghostly in the gloom, and each swinging his rifle from his shoulder and hanging it on a peg near the door before he settled himself near the fire, where the quivering light flickered over silver chains, bright sashes, and colored turbans. Their large brown eyes regarded us with serious friendliness; when they turned their heads their profiles were sharp and fine against the darkness; and their hands were slender, firmly molded, aristocratic.

A small kid was brought for our inspection; we were to eat it for dinner. It looked at us mildly, contented in the arm that held it comfortably; its fur was soft as sealskin. One of the children rose and smilingly kissed its delicate muzzle, with a gesture of charming affection. Then they took it out and killed it, bringing back its skin, which they hung on a peg. After a time the mother goat came over and nuzzled that skin thoughtfully.

Then they brought us a lamb, all woolly white with youth, and we praised that, and they took it out and killed it. Its skin hung beside that of the kid. And after that they showed us a fat hen, and it also was so used to the companionship of humans that it uttered no faintest squawk when the woman who held it nonchalantly wrung its neck, just beyond the circle of firelight.

After that our host handed over the making of coffee to one of the village men and went out

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

574 to help his wife cook the dinner; there was a built-up place of stone outside where the cooking fire was made. All this time we had been talking, making the courteous speeches that accompany coffee drinking, and exchanging cigarettes.

One of the empty cigarette boxes—the little, ten-cigarette, tin-foil-lined ones—I handed to a little boy, perhaps four years old. He took it gravely, thanking me like a man, and retired to look at it. But hardly had he opened the flap when I saw the hand of a chief come over the boy's shoulder and quietly take the box. The boy gave it up, not even a shade of discontent on his face, and it passed slowly from hand to hand, was inspected, marveled at, discussed. The cunningness of the folding, the beautiful design of printing and picture, the delicacy of the tissue paper that had been around the cigarettes, the pliability of the tin foil, of metal, and yet so thin, engrossed them all. When they had satisfied their curiosity and admiration, it went back to the boy, who took it with his hand on his heart, bowed, and sat for a long time looking at it.

"Have you ever seen such perfect courtesy?" said, I, marveling. "And from such a baby!"

Perolli looked at me in amazement. "Why, what's strange about it?" he asked.

423
518 Undoubtedly we were among the most courteous people in the world, I thought, but the next moment that idea was completely upset,

for out of the darkness walked that rebel woman 423
who believes in private property. 578

She came quite calmly into the circle of the firelight, her beautiful hands low on her thighs, below the wide, silver-shining marriage belt, the blue beads twinkling at the ends of the long black braids of her hair, her chin up, and a light of battle in her eyes.

"May you live long!" said she to the circle, and, "To you long life!" we responded. But the chiefs looked at her sidewise from narrowed eyes and then again at the fire, and hostility came from them like a chill air. The children looked at her with wide, attentive eyes, chins on their hands; the sprawling, graceful, handsome youths seemed amused. Beyond the firelight, the women of the household went about their tasks; one came in and lowered from her shoulders a large, kidney-shaped wooden keg of water.

"When am I going to get my house?" said the woman. She stood there superb, holding that question like a bone above a mob of starving dogs, and they rose at it.

I have never seen such pandemonium. Three chiefs spoke at once, snarling; they were on their feet; all the men were on their feet; it was like a picture by Jan Steen changed into the wildest of futurist canvases. I expected them to fly at one another's throats, after the words that they hurled at one another like spears. I expected them to strike the woman, so violently they thrust their faces close to hers, clenching quiver-

423 ing fists on the hilts of the knives in their sashes.
578 She stamped her foot; her lips curled back like a dog's from her fine, gleaming teeth, and she stood her ground, flashing back at them words that seemed poisoned by the venom in her eyes. "My house!" she repeated, and, "I want my house!" These words, the only ones I recognized, were like a motif in the clamor; Rexh and Perolli were both too much absorbed to translate, and we added to the turmoil by frantic appeals to them.

Then, suddenly as the calm after an explosion, they were all quiet. They sat down; they rolled cigarettes; the coffee maker picked up his flung-away pot and went on making coffee. Only the eyes of the chiefs were still cold and bitter, and the woman, though silent, was not at all defeated. There was a pause.

"Ask them what she wants," said I, quickly, to Perolli.

"Who can say what the avalanche desires?" replied the chief, contemptuously. "She would break our village into pieces. She has no respect for wisdom or custom. She says that a house is her house; she is a widow with two sons, and she demands the house in which she lived with her husband. She wishes to take a house from the tribe and keep it for herself. Have the mountains seen such a thing since a hundred hundred years before the Turks came? She is *gogoli*."[1]

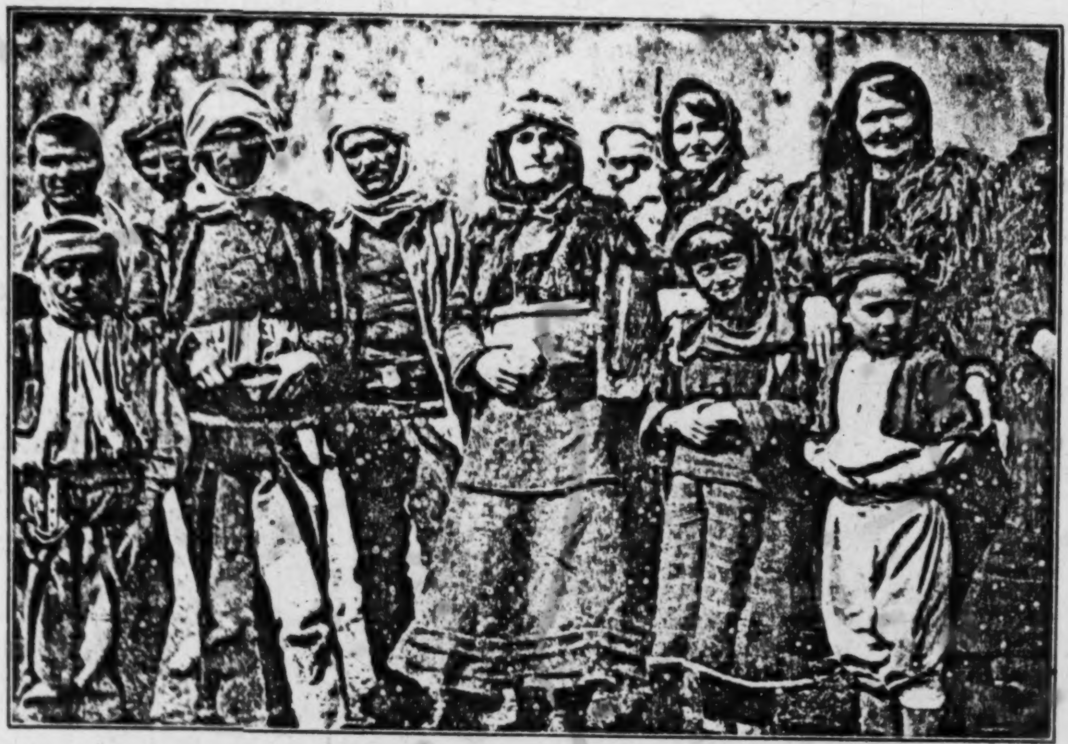
"I helped to build that house," said the woman.

---

[1] Gogoli—bewitched by a demon of the mountains; insane.

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGI Albania EGI

291



A GROUP OF MOUNTAIN FOLK

The woman of Pultit in the center.

(106a)

PEAKS OF SHALA

423 578 "With my own hands I laid the roof upon it. It is my house. I will not give up my house."

Frances and I hugged each other in silent convulsions of delight. My pen spilled ink on my excited hands as I tried to capture their words in shorthand. I was seeing, actually seeing with my own eyes, the invention of private property!

"What are they going to do about it?"

The question was not too tactful, nor too happily received, but they answered it. "They have already called a council of the whole village four [627] times," said Perolli. "They will do nothing about it.[1] Houses belong to the tribe. It is a large house, and the people have decided that her dead husband's brother shall have it for his household. She has been offered a place in it. If she does not want that, she can live wherever she likes in the tribe. No one will refuse shelter or food to her and her children. She has friends with whom she can live, since she quarrels with her husband's brother. All this is absurd, and they will not call another council to satisfy a foolish woman."

"I want my house," said the woman.

Then the oldest man—one of the little boys was playing with the silver chains around his neck, and another hung heavily against his shoulder, but his dignity was undisturbed and he was obviously chief of the chiefs—appealed to me.

609 423 "In your country, what would you do with such a woman?" And I perceived that I was

[1] [For data on this grie- [107] vance, see cat. 116, pp. 97-101, 104-107 -- Analyst]

423
609

obliged to explain to this circle of eager listeners a system of social and economic life of which they had never dreamed, of which they knew as little as we know of the year 2900.

The woman sat impassive, as unmoved as a rock of her mountains; the younger men turned, propping their chins on their elbows and looking at me attentively, and the chiefs waited with expectation. The children, settled comfortably here and there in the mass of lounging bodies, stopped their quiet playing to listen.

"Go on," said Alex, with friendly malice. "Just tell them what private property is."

"I expect sympathy, not ribald mirth," said I. "Well," I said, carefully, "tell them, Perolli, that when I say 'man' I mean either a man or a woman. It isn't quite true, of course, but I'll have to say that. Now then. In my country, a man owns a house."

"*Po! Po!*" they said, shaking their heads from side to side in the sign that in Albanian means, "Yes." "It is so here. A man owns the house in which he lives."

"No, it's not that. In my country, a man can own a house in which he does not live."

Then they were surprised. "You must have many houses in your tribe, if some are left vacant."

("Shades of the housing situation!" murmured Alex. "Shut up!" said I.)

"No," I said. "You don't understand. In my country a man owns a house. It is his very

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

own house. He owns it always; he owns it after 423
he is dead. He owns it when other people live 609
in it."

"In your country dead men own houses? Dead men live in houses?"

"No. Living in a house has nothing to do with owning a house. A man owns a house; it is his house; other people live in that house, and they pay him money to be allowed to live in his house."

"We do not understand. In your country do men of the same tribe pay one another money for houses?"

"Yes."

There was always a pause after I had spoken, while they pondered.

"Ah!" they said. "In your country a man can build a house all by himself. You have one man who makes all the houses for the village, and the others divide with him the money they earn outside the tribe."

"No," I said. "In my country many men must work to build a house." And I tried to think how best to go on.

"But it is so here," they said. "Many men of the tribe build a house, and then the house is a house of the tribe."

"But it is different in my country," I insisted. "In my country the house does not belong to the tribe. It belongs to the man who owns the land on which it is built, and he pays money to the men who build it for him, and then it is his house.

423 Even if he lives somewhere else, it is still his
609 house. Now in the case of this woman, the house would belong to her husband, and when he died he would give her the house, and then it would be her house. It would belong to her. The tribe would not own the house, but she would pay money to the tribe from time to time, because she had the house."

("Don't tell me you're going to explain taxation, too!" chortled the joyous Frances. "For the love of Michael, do this yourself, then!" said I.)

But the chiefs passed over the taxation idea; they stuck to the main point, though their eyes were clouded with bewilderment.

"How can a man own land?" said one, more in amazement than in question. And, "But how can a man pay another man for helping him to build a house, except by helping him as much in building another house? And when all have helped one another equally, then no man would have two houses unless every man had two houses, and that would be foolish, for half the houses would be empty," reasoned another, slowly.

It was then that the remarkable intelligence of these people began to dawn on me. For, given the experience from which he was reasoning, I consider this one of the most intelligent and logical methods of meeting a new idea that I have known. A case of almost pure logic, given his starting point.

CHAPTER VII

CAN A MAN OWN A HOUSE?—WE SING FOR OUR HOSTS OF PULTIT—DAWN AND A MEETING ON THE TRAIL—THE VILLAGE OF THETHIS WELCOMES GUESTS—LIFE OR DEATH FOR PEROLLI.

423

BUT my delight in this discovery of their intelligence received a violent blow almost at once, for another man—tall, keen featured, black bearded, his face framed in the folds of a white turban, red and blue stones gleaming dully in the links of the silver chains on his breast; I will never forget him—leaned forward in the firelight and said: "Such things can never be. Even a child knows that it would be foolish to own a house in which he did not live. Of what use is a house, except to live in? As it is, each man has the house in which he lives, and there are houses for all, and they belong to the tribe that built them. It is impossible that a man can own a house. It is not the nature of men to own houses, and we will never do it, for the nature of man is always the same. It is the same to-day as it was before the Romans came, and it will always be the same. And no man will ever own a house."

"Glory to your lips!" they said to him. "It is so."

PEAKS OF SHALA

000 The woman, who had been sitting quietly listening to this, now rose and very quietly, without saying farewell, slipped out of the firelight, and in a moment, by the sound of the closing door, I knew she had left the house. But there was something about my last glimpse of her back that makes me believe she is still clamoring for her house, and will be until long after her baby sons are grown and married. Unless she gets it sooner.

533 There was a little silence after the woman had gone, and then one of the youths, compressing his ears with his thumbs, began to sing.[1] He sang softly, for an Albanian mountaineer, but the high, clear notes filled the house like those of a bugle. He uttered a phrase and paused; Cheremi repeated it and paused; and, so singing alternately, repeating always the same musical phrase with changing words, they chanted long songs of war and adventure, old legends of men whose lives had been worn into myths by the erosion of centuries.

The music, strange and nostalgic, seemed to follow a scale quite different from ours, a simple scale of five notes, thin and vibrating like a violin string.

000 [551] "Sing one of the songs of your land, Flower," said Cheremi to me, politely. All the Albanians addressed us by our first names, as is the custom, for among them the last name is merely the possessive form of the father's, and it is dropped in conversation. Long since my name had been

[1] [At house in Albanian mountains -- Analyst]

translated into their tongue, becoming Drana 000 Rugi-gnusht, Flower of the Narrow Road.

And we gave them our best. We sang "Juanita," and "My Old Kentucky Home" and "Marching Through Georgia" and "Dixie" and "Columbia." We stood up and filled our lungs and sang with all our might, but the result was thin and faint; even to our own ears our songs were difficult to hear, after the ringing voices of the Albanians. "Glory to your lips," they said, courteously, trying to cover their disappointment and lack of interest. Then we tried "A Hot Time in the Old Town To-night," and that fell flat. But from depths of her memory Frances resurrected an old American popular song; its name I never knew, I had never heard it before; it had something to do with an obviously improper conversation over a telephone, ending, "Are you wise, honey eyes? Good-by!"

That got them! They sat up, very much interested. "We know that song, too!" said they, and, putting their thumbs to their ears, they sang it in voices that compared with ours as a factory whistle to a penny one. Except that in their mouths it became a beautiful thing, vibrant with innumerable grace notes, and striking truly where our version became banal. Changed, but it was our melody as unmistakably as a beautiful woman is the mother of her ugly daughter. "But that is not a true mountain song, it is a song of the cities," they said, and we wondered whether it had come to us through Vienna or gone from us to them through Paris.

000 "Try them on the 'Merry Widow,'" I said, knowing that that music had come to us from [339] the Balkans, and they laughed aloud at the strains of that famous waltz. "Albanian gypsy music," said they, and from somewhere in the shadows they produced a sort of musical instrument, cunningly carved from pine, in shape like a long, thin mandolin, strung with horse hair, and on this with a hair-strung bow they played us the real "Merry Widow" waltz. "You have gypsies in your country, too," said they, and we thought how the centuries have transformed the wandering bands of ragged entertainers into our press-agented musical-comedy companies; how the commercial age had divided fortune telling, thieving, and music into complex and separate activities.

At eleven o'clock Cheremi broke reluctantly from the merry group and, approaching us stealthily, whispered his request to be permitted to go home for the night. His house lay only four hours away, perhaps forty miles by our measurements; he had not seen his family for two years, and he wished to visit them. He would be back before dawn. We gave him permission, and one of the villagers went with him, to guard him from the village dogs.

231 Then we learned that when darkness came the dogs were let loose, and after their loosening only the boldest ventured outside stone walls. And the long wolf howl that rose and quavered and sank and rose again along the trail that Cheremi

followed made the dangers of the night vocal for 231
us. We had seen the dogs, tied by the houses, curled into sullen gray-white balls; they are wolves, they are the first dogs, torn from the forests and made half-tame savage companions of these primitive men. Here in the Albanian mountains the long process of molding life, by which men have created the breeds of dogs we know, the great Dane, the collie, the monstrous, fantastic bulldog, and the wispy Pekingese is still in its beginning.

For us, safe in the shelter of solid walls, the 512
night wore away as the previous one had done. Talk and music and the desperate struggle with weariness; the leisurely dinner in the small hours of the morning; the brief lapse into unconscious- [513]
ness, lying on the floor, which we shared with twenty others—our host and his wife and their smallest child, the last quite naked, had ascended the notched log to the nest of woven willow branches that hung above us on the wall—and the awakening at dawn to the smell of new-made coffee.

"Perolli," said Frances, desperately, "I simply 000
can't walk another twenty miles on one little cup of coffee. Isn't there something left over from dinner? Can't I have just one little bite of corn bread? Oh, Perolli, please!"

"If we stay for that, it means we'll never start," said I. "Slowly, slowly, little by little, breakfast will be ready at six this afternoon."

"But I'm starving!" she wailed.

PEAKS OF SHALA

000 To Alex and me the cool, sweet morning outside the smoke-filled dark house called more irresistibly than any thought of food. So at six o'clock, accompanied by the gay Cheremi, who had just returned, she and I set out on the twenty-mile walk to Thethis,[1] leaving Perolli explaining that Frances was of a different American tribe, a tribe whose custom was to eat in the mornings.

It was not rain; the sky was like one enormous waterspout. When we came out of the smoky, reeking darkness of the cavelike house it was like plunging into a waterfall. We gasped with the shock of it; water poured down our faces, and in an instant there was not a dry inch of skin on our bodies. But we had been some days in these mountains, walking in the rain, and after the first chill impact our blood rebounded; we were warm, and, clutching streaming staffs in dripping hands, Alex and I followed Cheremi gayly enough. Though when we were separated for a few feet on the trail the figures of the others became blurry and indistinct, like figures seen through ground glass.

We went first down the bed of a small stream that ran steeply from the mountains above to the Lumi Shala below. The water was about a foot deep, but as soon as we got used to the force of the current we went very well. Whenever we came to a sheer drop of three or four feet Cheremi braced himself and swung us lightly down. So we progressed for perhaps a third of a mile, tingling with the exertion. Then we came out on the narrow gravelly banks of the Lumi Shala, and were joined by a strange Albanian, nude to the waist, who was out for a morning stroll.

---

[1] Pronounced as Thaythee—th as in truth.

The proper thing was to offer him cigarettes, but how could one do it beneath that pour of water? However, the difficulty soon solved itself, for we found a bowlder as large as a house, with a natural corridor running through it, and, though its walls dripped and our feet sank to the ankles in little wells, we managed here to produce and light our damp cigarettes.

The little cave was filled with a curious greenish light, like that beneath the sea; at either end of it a gray wall of falling water shut off our view. Dimly we saw through it a vague blur of tawny gravel, and nothing more.

The strange Albanian conveyed to us with effort, in broken Serbian, Italian, German, and Albanian, that this weather was bad for the health, because when it rained the water in the streams was not good, and drinking it caused pains in the lungs.

"Good Heavens!" said we. "Pneumonia!"

Then we went out of the cave, and Cheremi and the stranger carried us across the waist-deep Lumi Shala on their backs, balanced precariously on their shoulders, surrounded by what seemed an infinity of rushing water, milky greenish in color and seeming to snap up at us with millions of white teeth as the violent raindrops struck upon it.

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

PEAKS OF SHALA

000 After that, it was only fifteen miles up the beds of streams, across damp expanses of green and crimson and gray-blue shale, and along narrow ledges suspended between two vaguenesses of gray, until we came to the village of Thethis, on the headwaters of the Lumi Shala.

We came to it suddenly, a high-lifted sweep of rock, like the prow of a gigantic ship wedged between the sides of the narrowing valley. It towered a thousand feet above our heads, and on either side of it a white waterfall plunged from the sky and roared into gray depths below.

We followed the side of a narrowing chasm, climbing back and forth like ants on the side of the cliff, making for the top of one of those waterfalls. We reached it and, standing in a welter of spray on a tiny rock ledge, we hung over that battle of roaring water and granite cliffs to admire the workmanship of the three-foot wall of stone that held up the trail. The Albanian who was with us had made it, and he was very proud of it. He might well be.

Then the trail turned the shoulder of the cliff, climbed up a gorge so narrow that the two-foot stream covered its bottom, turned again and came out on a little plateau. There was a wide stream running across the flat space; its water was milky green with melted limestone, and it was strewn with large, smooth, round bowlders. Some of the bowlders were pure white marble, others were bright rose pink, others were black as ebony, and one great one was green as jade.

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

PEAKS OF SHALA

A bridge of two logs, with railing of twisted 100 branches, ran from bowlder to bowlder across this incredible river, and we stood on it, gazing at these colors and at a cliff that rose before us, striped rose and green and gray and white in long jagged lines, as though it had been painted, when we heard overhead an outburst of cries, like a hundred sea gulls shrieking in a storm. We looked higher, and there on the top of the 526 cliff we saw a score of boys, naked except for 576 bright loin cloths, engaged in acrobatics. 609

They made pyramids of their wet white bodies; four, three, two, one, they stood on one another's shoulders, and the four who upheld the pyramid ran swiftly along the edge of the cliff, passing and circling about a similar pyramid; from top to top of the pyramids the top youths swung, passing each other in the air, landing on other shoulders, balancing, taking flight again. The pyramids melted, as though dissolved in the rain, and formed again, while all along the edge of the precipice other boys made a freize of living bodies, turning cart wheels, somersaulting over one another, walking on their hands.

We stood paralyzed. What did it mean? Then there was an explosion of shots; the cliffs around us crackled like giant firecrackers, the air seemed to fall in fragments around us, and through the din came multiplied shouts. Four tall chiefs appeared on the cliff trail, gorgeous in black and white and red and blue and green and silver. We were being welcomed to Thethis.

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

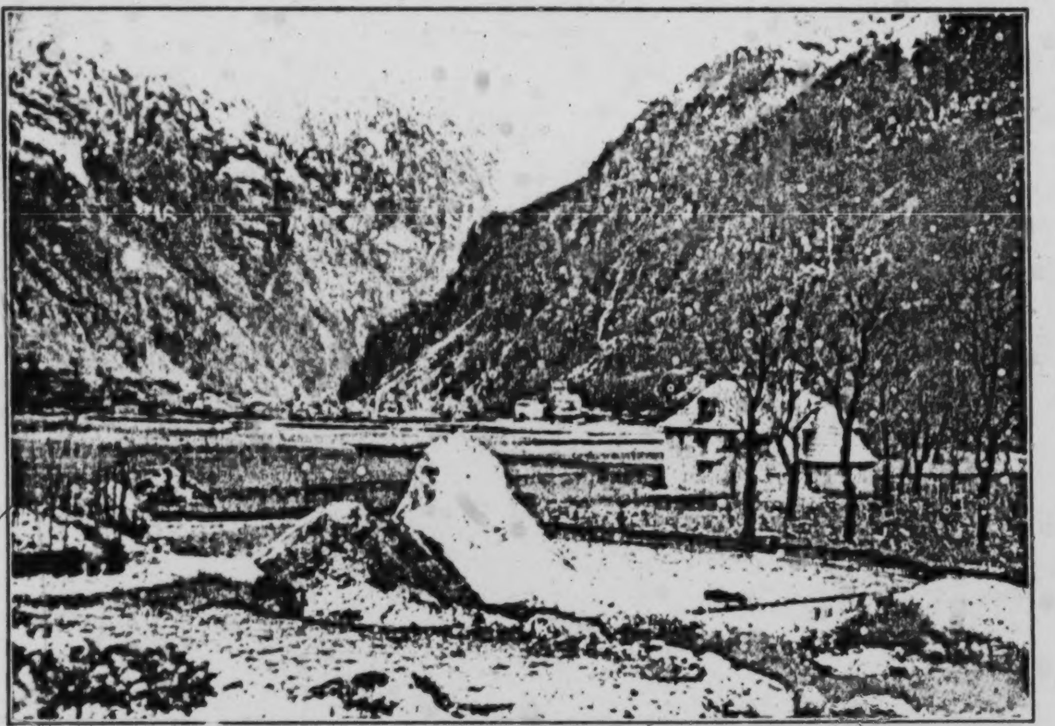
PEAKS OF SHALA

756 609 The shouts redoubled, rifles cracked from every rock, the church bell wildly rung, and through the clamor, deafened and a little dizzy, we came into the village of Thethis. The four chiefs, having greeted us ("Long life to you! Glory to your feet! Glory to the trails that brought you!" they said) preceded us up the last breathless quarter of a mile of trail, and all along the way the boys turned handsprings on the cliff tops.

361 The village of Thethis is built on the plateau that tops the gigantic, shiplike rock wedged in the narrow head of Shala Valley. All around it rise the mountains, snow capped, seamed with white waterfalls like rich quartz with streaks of silver; the shadows of them lie almost all day long across the village. Thethis itself is perhaps thirty large, oblong stone houses scattered at wide intervals on the flat land, and all the land is divided neatly into squares by stone fences—some fields for corn, some for grain, some for meadow. In the midst stands the church, two stories, oblong and gray like the houses, and a network of trodden paths leads to it.

It seemed a quiet, peaceful place. But on the mountains above it to the north the Serbian armies lay; their mountain-trained eyes were doubtless watching us as we crossed the sodden fields. This is the village, these are the chiefs, whose houses were destroyed by a company of soldiers sent from the struggling Albanian government in Tirana. The Serbs held the Albanian

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGI Albania EGI



THE PLATEAU OF THETHIS

In the foreground the church, etc. The hills in the background are held by the Serbs.

133
346

(120a)

361 cities where the men of Thethis have always gone to market; the grazing lands where they have always fed their sheep lie in the grasp of Serbian armies. Scutari, the nearest free Albanian market place, is a hundred miles away across two mountain ranges. Therefore it was said that Thethis was friendly to the Serbs; it was said that her men still went to market in the Albanian cities that are now clutched by Serbia, that spies came and went across the border, that the chiefs listened to the clink of Serbian gold. And Alex and I remembered that in Thethis we were not to address Rrok Perolli, secretary of the Albanian Minister of the Interior, by his real name.

609
594 But he was behind us on the trail, doubtless still engaged in trying to get breakfast for Frances in the house we had left, and we went forward with easy minds to meet Padre Marjan. He came barefooted and bareheaded across the fields to welcome us, a thin, ascetic-looking man in the brown robes of the Franciscan friar. Large brown eyes burned in his face that seemed made of bones and stretched skin, the grasp of his thin hand was hot and nervous. He spoke to us in Albanian, Italian, and German, ushering us with apologies into the bleak rooms above the church.

000 The Serbians and Montenegrins, in their drive down toward Scutari, had looted the church, he said. He had come into Thethis two months ago, and found not even a wooden stool left. He was doing his best, but it took time ——

PEAKS OF SHALA

010 The rickety broken stairway led upward to a long hall; from this, a door let us into the living room. It was bare; rain-stained wooden walls and a floor that clattered beneath our feet. The one window was shattered; fragments of glass held together by pasted paper. There were a long wooden table and a bench, nothing more. No fire. Our soaked garments were suddenly cold on us, and a chill entered our very bones.

609
514 The only fire in the house, he said, was in the kitchen. We begged him to take us to it, and in a moment we were sitting on a bench before a crackling fire in a big stone fireplace. The tiny room was crowded with villagers, the floor was muddy with their trampling, and more arrived every moment. Padre Marjan had no servant, but all were eager to help him. Some took off our shoes, others heated water over the fire, a handsome youth who looked Serbian and talked German anxiously beat eggs and sugar together while Padre Marjan made coffee. The warmth and the genuine welcome they all gave thawed us and made us happy, and we sat drinking the heartening mixture of eggs and coffee, while clouds of steam rose from us all and a babble of talk went on.

One tall, handsome chief—Lulash, his name was, and beyond doubt he was the handsomest man we had yet seen—brought us a lamb as a gift. Dripping beside him stood a ragged boy, barefooted and blue with chill, who had come down the valley to bring us three eggs, which he carried tied around his waist in a pouch of goat's 609 skin. He put them carefully into our hands, and 574 we tried to return the gift with some pieces of hoarded candy. But he gazed in dismay at the strange things, and nothing would persuade him to taste them. A colored handkerchief, however, was accepted in an ecstasy that made him dumb; he could only lay it upon his heart and touch our hands to his forehead. Another chief came with a fat hen, others with eggs; all were eager to roll cigarettes for us, all were smiling, and in a hundred beautiful phrases they overwhelmed us with thanks for our coming, for our presence, for the school that Alex and Frances had promised Thethis. For this was to be the first of the [871] mountain schools, and Alex, who had come into the mountains to decide where to put the other two, was delighted to learn that already, before the school building was begun, Padre Marjan had started the school, and Lulash had promised a hundred trees to be burned to make lime for the building.

We sat talking of these things while Padre Marjan set pots of soup to boiling in the fireplace, broke eggs, unlocked his box of precious flour, busied himself with all preparations for dinner, climbing over and around the tangle of lounging bodies, until another outbreak of echoing noises announced the arrival of Frances and Perolli and Rexh and our men with the packs. We felt a little tension with Perolli's arrival, seeing the keen eyes of the men fixed on his English

609
574
clothes and swarthy, intelligent face. He is as tall as most Europeans, but he was small among those giants, and the neat leather-holstered revolver and dagger that hung from his belt looked inadequate among all those long, bristling rifles.

But Padre Marjan, unaware of our apprehensions, was altogether the happy welcoming host. He greeted the dripping Frances warmly, anxious only to make her comfortable—she who was also responsible for the hope of a school in Thethis. He welcomed Perolli also, calling him by his first name. "How does he know that Perolli's name is Rrok?" we girls asked one another with startled eyes—and then, turning to the chiefs with a radiant smile, "This guest," said Padre Marjan, with pleasure, "is Rrok Perolli, the secretary of the Minister of the Interior in Tirana."

000 You read of such things calmly. Nothing that one reads is real to him. Therefore you can never know what Padre Marjan's innocent words meant to us as he spoke them in his crowded kitchen in Thethis, at the headwaters of the Lumi Shala, a hundred miles and twenty centuries from anything you know.

The wildness, the savagery and isolation of those mountains seemed to come into the room. A hundred miles to Scutari, a hundred miles of almost impassable mountains between us and any kind of help. There we were, three girls and a boy, alone in the narrow valley beneath the eyes of the Serbs, the Serbs who six months earlier had caught Perolli and condemned him to death.

A chill wind seemed to blow through the room; it was not imagined. Every wide, friendly eye about us had narrowed, every lip tightened a trifle. A thousand currents of antagonism, of distrust, of intrigue, seemed like tangible things in the air; only Padre Marjan remained warm, innocent and smiling.

None of us four, certainly not Perolli, doubted that we had just heard his death sentence spoken. And I felt again the depths below depths in the Albanian mind, in that primitive mind which is so much more complex than ours, as I saw him smile, easily and naturally, and heard him saying, "Long may you live!" to the circle of his enemies.

"And to you long life!" said they, while he offered them cigarettes and they rolled others in exchange. He sat down easily on the bench before the fire; with an unconsidered simultaneous movement we three girls moved forward and sat beside him; the chiefs again took their places on the floor, foremost of a mass of bodies and faces, and Padre Marjan moved in and out and around us all, stirring and seasoning the contents of the pots that bubbled in the fireplace.

"Talk to them, say something!" said Perolli, in a careless tone, offering me a cigarette.

"Thank you," said I, in Albanian, taking it. "Tell them that I come from California, the most beautiful part of America, and that I have seen the American mountains and the mountains of Switzerland, both famous around the world, and that I have never seen such beautiful mountains as those of the Land of the Eagle. (They will not do anything while we are here, will they?)"

Perolli translated. "They say: 'Glory to your lips. Do you live among the American mountains?' (No, not unless they get me alone.)"

"In America we cannot live among such mountains. We cannot climb such trails; we are not strong, like the Albanians. When we go any distance we ride, and we have forgotten how to walk up cliffs. We have rich, soft houses, and we travel everywhere on soft cushions, and all our life is easy. But old men still remember when our life was hard and rugged, as it is here, and I have seen in America houses of stone, like these, with very small windows and pegs on the walls where rifles were hung. For our fathers' fathers lived hard lives surrounded by enemies, as the Albanians do now, and some old men still remember those days. (Do you want me to keep them talking?)"

"They say: 'What has made the change? Have you cut down your mountains?' (Yes. I want a little while to think.)" And he leaned back and crossed his knees and lighted another cigarette.

"Well, America was very much like Albania in many ways," said I. "We were ruled by another nation, as the Albanians were, and we revolted, like the Albanians. Then our tribes fought, as these tribes fight, among themselves. And life was very hard. But we had a young government of our own, as the Albanians have, and it grew stronger, and after a while all the tribes stopped fighting. Then when they were not fighting they used all their strength to make life easy, and it became very easy, and all the houses had windows, because there were no more enemies to shoot through them, and we made great wide trails that were easy to travel, and we made and carried all kinds of goods on them and became very rich, just as Albania will do."

"And schools," said Alex. "Don't forget the schools."

Perolli translated at length. When he had finished, Lulash rose, and he was very splendid in his six feet of height, a snowy turban with folds beneath the chin outlining his strong, sensitive, sun-browned face, silver chains clinking against the jewel-studded silver pistols in his orange-and-red sash, and he made a beautiful speech, graceful with a hundred flowery metaphors, thanking us and, beyond us, America, in the name of his village, his tribe, and all his people, for the school and the hope it brought.

"I," he said, "am a great chief; I have a great house and large flocks and much silver, and all that I have I would give if I could read. I am a chief of Thethis, and my people look to me, and many things are happening outside our mountains that mean much to my people and

I cannot learn what they are and what they mean, because I cannot read. Every night I come to Padre Marjan and study the little black marks, and long afterward I lie awake in my house and am shamed before myself for the ignorance of my whole life. But you have brought learning into my village; our children will know more than we. Our hope is in the children; they will be little torches leading us out of the darkness. You have lighted these torches, and I say to you, for Thethis, for Shala, and for the Land of the Eagle, our hearts are yours to walk upon. Long may you live!"

"Go on a smooth trail," said we, as he went out, all the other men following him. Then, released from their observant eyes, we looked at one another with all the panic we felt.

"What will they do? Did he mean what he said? Can we expect any protection from him for you, if we ask it?" said Frances.

"*Qui sait?*" said Perolli. "We Albanians use many words. They have gone to hold a council. All their immediate interests lie with the Serbs. If they hand me over—well, you know the Serbian armies hold their markets and their grazing lands, and a million Albanians are in Serbia's power. We have nothing like that to offer these chiefs from Tirana, yet."

"But we are guests! But we are women!" we exclaimed.

"Oh, they won't act quickly. But the trails are long, in the mountains. Let me think," said

Perolli. And we were silent, watching Padre Marjan busy and anxious about the cooking.

The hours went by, with a steadily increasing tension on the nerves. It is so rarely that we are actually in the center of a situation involving murder that we do not easily adjust ourselves to it. With Perolli it was different; he did not disguise a very earnest desire to save his life, but he is Albanian. He laughed, quite as usual; he sat on the bench before the fire and told stories, and sang Albanian songs, and joked with Padre Marjan. Only occasionally the thoughts beneath the surface of his mind rose and engulfed him in a dark silence. At dinner he ate with good appetite. As for us, watching him, we could not avoid the horrid idea of the good breakfasts served before executions.

We ate in the bare, bleak living room. It was intensely cold; we wore sweaters and coats. Rain blew through the broken window upon us. We would infinitely have preferred to be squatting by the fire in a native house, but Padre Marjan's hospitable pride would have been stabbed if we had suggested eating in the kitchen. So we sat on the bench, with the table before us, and both of them seemed very strange, and knives and forks and plates appeared to us the most absurd of hindrances to the simple and pleasant action of eating. Why, we said, did we ever invent them; they are not really beautiful or useful; they simply clutter up our lives; and we were aghast, thinking of all the factories and

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

railroad cars and stores and dishpans and the millions of hours of washing up, all of it, one might say, an enormous river of human energy running into the waste of heaps of broken crockery, and nothing more.

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE HOUSE OF PADRE MARJAN—LULASH GIVES A WORD OF HONOR AND DISCUSSES MARRIAGE—THE STOLEN DAUGHTER OF SHALA.

PADRE MARJAN sat with us, but did not ooo eat, as it was a fast day. An apparently endless succession of dishes—soup, lamb, omelettes, pork chops, chicken—was brought in by Cheremi and served by Rexh in his red fez. Poor little Rexh! He ate nothing but a bit of corn bread; he said the pork chops had been broiled in the fireplace, and he feared that some of the fat had spattered into the cooking pots. He was not sure, but he feared so, and he thought it safer not to eat anything prepared in them.

The lamb's head, skinned but otherwise intact, was served separately, boiled, and the delicacy of the meal was its brains, which we got at by cutting through the skull. When the chicken 787 came, Cheremi presented it with awe in his eyes, and after we had eaten he whispered behind his hand to Perolli. In the kitchen, he said, they were talking of the chicken; it was not of Padre Marjan's raising, but it had been hatched and brought up in the village, and they were sure that its breastbone would foretell the immediate future of Thethis. Would we let him have it?

PEAKS OF SHALA

787 Perolli took up the thin bone and very carefully cleaned it of every clinging bit of flesh. Then, with an apology to Padre Marjan, he held it up to the light from the window. Through the translucent bone the marrow, clouded with clotted blood, showed clearly, and Perolli read it with serious eyes, pointing out to us its meaning. There was a clot that meant a battle, a battle to the north, and there was a widening red line running from a dark spot; the signs were clear. The government would grow more powerful, and there would be war to the north, war with the Serbs.

He gave the bone to Cheremi, who tiptoed toward the kitchen with it. I strained my ears to hear how it was received; I thought that the portent of strong government might make the people think it unwise to hand Perolli over to the Serbs; they must know that in any case his death would be avenged by soldiers from Tirana. But would it, since he was traveling "on a vacation"? Governments do not usually back up their secret-service men who fail on the job. There was no sound from the kitchen, and we entertained Padre Marjan by showing him how, in America, we use the wishbone to foretell a part of the future. But any wishbone will do that for us, while in Albania only the breastbone of a hen that has lived all her life in the family will foretell that family's future.

000 Outside, it continued to rain, if that state of the air when it is surely half water can be called

rain. We were glad to get back to the kitchen fire. The chiefs and older men of the village did not return, but many women and children came in to talk to the strangers, and it was evident that the padre's kitchen was the village clubhouse; they were all at home and happy there. The padre himself washed the dishes and swept the floor with a pine bough, chatting with them all as he did so; one saw, in the atmosphere of intimacy and democracy and respect around him what the Church used to be to the people long ago.

Then he set pans of water to heating for our baths, and when they were warm he lighted the way with a candle to his bedroom, which he had loaned to us. Another large, bare room with wooden unpainted walls, a bedstead of rough boards with a mattress laid on them, and sheets and pillow cases of red-and-white-plaided cotton, hand woven; in one corner an office desk, and on the wall beside the bed a rosary.

At midnight Perolli and Padre Marjan retired to the cold, wet living room, to roll themselves in blankets and sleep on the floor. We three girls sat shivering on the mattress and wished we knew what the chiefs were deciding.

But, oh! it was good to take off the clothes, so many times soaked with rain, in which we had walked and climbed and slept for three days and nights. And forks may be idle luxuries, but there is no question that a thin mattress filled with straw and laid on raised boards is one of the greatest comforts in life!

PEAKS OF SHALA

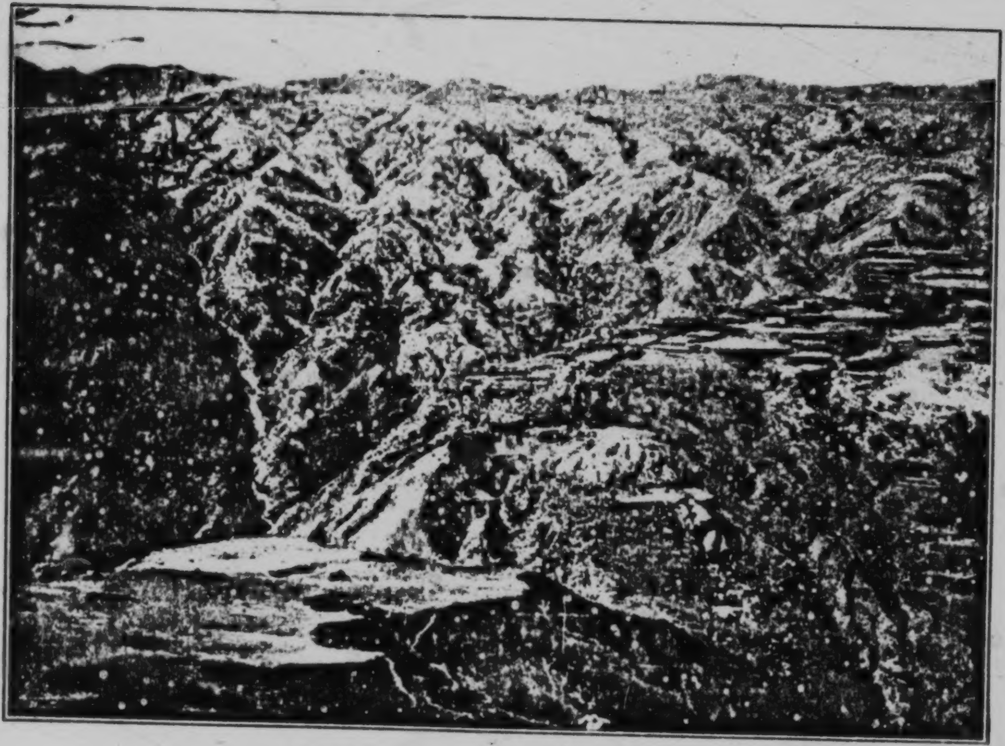
'000 We were awakened in the damp chill of a watery gray dawn, and with surprise found ourselves on its unfamiliar softness, in the bleak room of unpainted boards. Padre Marjan was knocking at the door. In a moment he entered, barefooted, in his long brown robe girded with cord, and, going to the incongruous office desk, he carefully unlocked a lower drawer and took out a box of soap. There were twenty small cakes of soap in the box. He took out one, carefully, put the box back in the drawer, locked it.

871 He[1] had been followed by a small boy, a very
861 serious child, and visibly nervous. About eleven years old, he wore the long, tight, black-braided white trousers, colored sash, and woolly, fringed short black jacket of his people, but they were all soaking wet and very old, mended and mended again until hardly any of the original fabric was left. His bare feet were blue with cold, and so were his bare arms, for the Scanderbeg jacket has no sleeves, and he did not wear a shirt. He stood very straight, and swallowed hard, keeping his face impassive.

Padre Marjan turned to him, holding the cake of soap. He spoke earnestly and at some little length. He then presented the cake of soap to the child, who bent a knee to receive it, and kissed the padre's hand and then the soap. An impressive little ceremonial, which we witnessed, wide eyed, from the mattress where we sat huddled among the blankets. Rain was still sluicing

[1] [Padre Marjan of Thethis -- [134] Analyst]

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGI Albania EGI



THE SHALA VALLEYS

133

[134a]

against the windows, so that the water on them was surely as thick as the glass. 871
861

We looked inquiringly at Frances, who understood Albanian. Her eyes shone, she was so excited. "It's a school prize!" she said, and, listening, "He's the best scholar in school; already he can read and write. Isn't it splendid!" The boy saluted us gravely; one saw that he had just gone through a profound emotional experience. "Long may you live!" said he, and went out.

Padre Marjan said that the school had been opened ten days before. On the first day there were forty-three pupils, on the second day sixty-two, on the third day ninety-seven. All the tribe was sending its children to live with relatives in Thethis and go to school. No more than ninety-seven could get into the padre's living room; the others must wait until, with the money Alex and Frances had collected, the schoolhouse could be built. There were no benches or desks, of course; the children stood packed tightly in the cold room, and he taught them by writing with a piece of chalk on the walls. Already this boy could read and write words of one syllable and merited a cake of soap. Padre Marjan, at his own expense, had sent two hundred miles to Tirana for fifty cakes of soap, to be used as prizes. There was, of course, no other soap in the tribe; a more magnificent gift could not have been imagined.

The boy who got the cake of soap walked 71

871 The boy who got the cake of soap walked every morning nine miles over the mountains to [857] reach school at seven o'clock, and at nine, after school, he walked back and took out the goats and spent all day climbing trees and cutting twigs for them to eat.

Padre Marjan said that as soon as he knew the Americans would build the school he had started teaching, and he had written to the government in Tirana and asked if it would help. He brought from the desk the letter he had received in reply. Written by hand, for the poverty-stricken young government had no typewriters, and sent by messenger into the mountains, in six weeks it had reached Thethis, and the padre kept it wrapped in a bit of hand-woven silk. Frances spelled it out; it said that the government would give a hundred kronen a month to pay the teacher. It was signed for the Minister of the Interior by Rrok Perolli.

000 "My sainted grandmother!" cried Frances. "Where is Perolli?" At that very minute the chiefs might be sending word to the Serbs to come and get him. The chiefs themselves would surely not violate the hospitality of their priest, but the Serbs would have no reverence for it and they were only a few miles away. When we thought what a bargain the chiefs might drive with the Serbs for Perolli it seemed too much to hope that one of them, at least, would not hand him over.

Padre Marjan spoke warmly of Perolli, whom he had so innocently betrayed; he said that he had once seen him at a distance in Scutari, and the village was honored to have him for a guest. While he said this he wrapped the precious letter in its silk and laid it carefully away in the desk. Then he went away, saying that he would send us a fire.

In a few minutes it came, a pile of hot coals in a large iron baking dish. Cheremi set it in the middle of the floor—where, indeed, it made little impression on the damp chill of the room—and went to fetch us cups of Turkish coffee. But we were too anxious to linger over it; we swallowed it hastily and dressed as quickly as possible, talking about what we could do to save Perolli. We thought that perhaps as American citizens we could overawe the Serbs, but none of us really had much hope of it; indeed, we had no right to attempt American protection for a secret-service agent of the Albanian government along the borders of the land held by invading Jugo-Slav armies. Still, we did not know that he was a secret-service agent; we had every right to suppose that he was merely our companion on a vacation trip. It was all very vague, but distressing.

Frances and Alex hurried out to find Perolli, but I sat helpless. No human effort would get my feet into the iron-hard shrunken shoes that had so long been water soaked. What on earth was I to do? Could I go barefooted over the mountains? More immediate question, could I go forth shoeless to inspire terror

000 of America in the breasts of possible Serbs? Ignoble predicament!

While I sat struggling with the obdurate leather the door opened and in came the magnificent figure of Lulash, the chief. He had none of the marks of self-conscious importance that our statesmen have; he was as simple, as graceful, and as unself-conscious as a tiger in his own jungle, and at the moment he struck me with something of the same spellbound, half-admiring terror. He looked as capable of swift, unconcerned killing as the rifle on his back. Behind him came Perolli, betraying the tension of his excitement only by the ease with which he concealed it.

Lulash saluted me as I stared up at him, petrified, from the mattress. "Long may you live!" said he, and, swinging the rifle from his back, he set it against the padre's desk. Then he sat down on the floor—there were, of course, no chairs in the room—close to the baking dish filled with warm coals. He did not lounge, but sat straight, his legs folded beneath him, and Perolli sat similarly on the other side of the baking dish. Lulash took a silver tobacco box from his sash and slowly rolled a cigarette; Perolli took from his pocket a box of the American variety; they exchanged cigarettes, lighted them by bending close to the red coals, and sat back again, watching each other in silence for some moments.

I put my shoes down stealthily, making not the slightest noise, tucked my feet beneath me, and sat perfectly still. Outside, the rain made a swishing sound; the soft roaring of a thousand waterfalls ran beneath it like an accompaniment. Thin streaks of snow-chilled, wet air came through the many cracks in the board walls and floor; they tore the cigarette smoke into dancing wisps. Wet spread slowly on the walls; the floor was spotted with damp where we had dropped our sodden clothes the night before. The coals in the baking dish were filming over with gray ash.

It was the first time I had ever been present at a diplomatic conference, and that one on which the fate of a nation depended. For if these mountain men did turn Perolli over to the Serbs, getting thereby the favor of the armies that held their cities and grazing lands, I had no doubt that it meant soldiers from Tirana coming up to Thethis, civil war with the northern tribes, and not at all improbably the murdering of the new-born government. Perhaps, indeed, another outbreak in the Balkans, the sore spot of Europe. And I could not understand Albanian!

Lulash spoke first, in short, decisive sentences. I caught the word "Serbs" and the word for "markets." At the end of each sentence Perolli shook his head sidewise, in the quick gesture that means, "Yes." Lulash was stating the case; Perolli was in his power; the Serbs wanted Perolli; the Serbs held Thethis's markets and grazing lands; moreover—for I caught the word "kronen"—there was the probability of reward. To all this Perolli assented. He had not yet spoken.

There was another slight pause, but not for him to break. Lulash was thinking. Then he leaned a little forward, put his hand on his heart, and spoke again. There was not the faintest expression on Perolli's face; I could not make out what was happening. When Lulash had ceased speaking Perolli smoked for a moment in silence. "You have done well," he said, then, in Albanian; and to me, "Have you got your fountain pen?"

I got it out of my trousers pocket and gave it to him quickly—too quickly. He was very leisurely about taking it. Then he opened his notebook and wrote in it. Lulash watched the moving pen with a sort of awed fascination. Perolli read aloud the words he had written, closed the notebook, and put it in his pocket. He showed no pleasure of relief, but the very atmosphere of the room had lightened.

Both men leaned back more easily and for the first time seemed to taste their cigarettes. Lulash looked at me; the aquiline profile became a full-face view of the handsome, sensitive, strong face framed in folds of white. What did I look like to those mountain eyes, I wondered, sitting there disheveled among tumbled blankets, a brown sweater bunched around my neck, my riding trousers creased and muddy and dangling their unputteed legs?

PEAKS OF SHALA

"I should be glad to see the women of my tribe wearing American garments," said Lulash. "Skirts are heavy and cumbersome; trousers are far better."

Perolli translated.

"Goodness! He thinks all American women wear trousers!" I said. "Well, tell him I thank him; I agree with him; for the mountains trousers are more comfortable. Tell him I am much interested in the women of his tribe and would like to ask him some questions about them. And I'll die right here if you don't tell me what's happened."

"He will be glad to tell you anything he knows, but no man understands the nature of women, which is like the streams that run under the mountains. Don't worry; it's all over."

"What do you mean? Ask him if he thinks it is a good idea to betroth children before they are born. (What did you write in the notebook?)"

"He says he does not think it a good idea. (I tell you it's all right.)"

"Oh, thank goodness! Then he does not think the women are happy in their marriages? (But tell me what he was saying to you, won't you?)"

"He‡ says that as for happiness, his people do not expect happiness in marriage; happiness comes from other things. (I cannot tell you; he would understand the word; I will spell it. He has sworn a *b-e-s-a* that his whole tribe will be loyal to the Albanian government as long as he [581]

‡[Lulash, tribal chief in Thethis -- Analyst]

000 lives. Careful! Don't let him suspect I'm talking about it.)"

Albanians, with their many languages, are used to such conversations. I hope I deceived Lulash; my training in dissimulation has been small. I was rather dizzy.

"From what does their happiness come, then?" said I. ("For Heaven's sake, what happened to make him do that?")

581 "Happiness," said Lulash, "comes from the
828 skies. It comes from sunshine, and from light and shadow on the mountains, and from green things in the spring. It comes also from rest when one is tired, and from food when one is hungry, and from fire when one is cold. It comes from singing together, and from walking on hard trails and being harder than the rocks; and there is a kind of happiness that comes to a man in battle, but that is a different kind. For us, marriage has nothing to do with happiness."

000 Perolli, translating, added, "He did it because the Albanian government has helped the American school here."

Then for the first time I really looked at Lulash. He had been until then simply a marvelously beautiful animal; a man such as men must have been before cities and machines and office desks brought dull skins and eyes, joy rides, padded shoulders, and crippling collars. Now I perceived that he was also a real person.

He saw beyond immediate gain for himself or his people. He had refused any advantages to

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

be gained by this unexpected dropping into his hands of this man that the Serbs wanted; he lived under the shadow of mountains alive with Serbian troops, his village was filled with Serbian influences, the Tirana government was two hundred miles away, and he knew nothing of it except that it had promised a hundred kronen a month to the mountain school that Alex and Frances had started. Yet he had come, voluntarily, without urging, to swear a *besa* of loyalty to that government because it had helped the school. And the *besa*, the word of honor, would hold him, I knew, as the strongest treaties never hold Western governments. I admired that man. I felt a tender sort of pity for him, too, because of his faith in the value of being able to read. After all, what has it done for us? Like most of civilization, it has done little more than create a useless desire that men become slaves to satisfy. It has made us very little kinder, very little less unsympathetic with alien points of view, and no farther from war, poverty, and misery than the Albanians are.

"Then what does marriage mean to the 581 Albanians?" I said, grasping for the thread of the conversation.

Lulash was really puzzled by my idea that marriage and happiness were in some way connected. He was courteous, but there was a little surprise in his voice. "Marriage is a family question," he said. "One marries because one is old enough to marry, and that is the way

581 the family goes on from generation to generation. You marry in America, do you not? You keep the family alive? How are marriages arranged in America?"

000 "With us," I said, "marriage does not have much to do with the family. Young people grow up thinking about themselves. Then, when they are old enough, if they have money enough to live on, and if they meet some one they like and want to marry, they marry. They marry to be happy, because they have found some one they want to live with always. They go away from their families, sometimes very far away, and live in a house by themselves."

It came over me, while I watched the surprise growing in Lulash's eyes, how haphazard and egotistic — how shallowly rooted, really — our whole system is. We marry because we want another human being, because—it really comes to that—we want to use that other human being to make happiness for ourselves. For even when one gets happiness by giving, instead of taking, it is still fundamentally a demand, a demand that the other take what is given, and that is sometimes the hardest of all demands to satisfy. Two persons, each demanding that the other be a source of personal happiness to him or her, each demanding, clutching, insisting on that gift from the other—that is the spectacle of American marriage. No wonder it so often ends in a heap of wreckage, out of which maimed human beings struggle through divorce.

581 “I do not understand what you mean by saying they must have money enough to marry,” said Lulash. “There is always money enough to marry, isn’t there? A man costs the tribe no more married than not married, and if new girls are brought into the tribe by marriage, others are given away in marriage. Even in the poorest tribes marriages never stop.”

000 “We have another system of owning property in America,” said I. “By that system, often men cannot afford to marry until they are quite old. They are never able to marry as young as you do here. In fact, many persons never marry at all.”

“Because there are not enough women?”

“Oh no! The women work, too, and do not marry. (Goodness! Perolli, tell him it is too difficult to explain.)”

“He thinks,” said Perolli, “that you mean that in your country the young men live like priests and the women like sworn virgins, such as they sometimes have here. He’s very deeply shocked by such an idea. I’ll have to tell him something—what? Either way, he’ll get the idea that Americans are utterly immoral.”

“Well, say that we have—that we have another kind of marriage, that isn’t exactly marriage—say we have concubines. He’ll understand that, from Turkey,” said I, in desperation. And while Perolli endeavored to explain and still uphold the honor of America in the eyes of a profoundly shocked chief of Shala, I tried to

000 devise another way of getting at the subject. For I did want to know what Albanian women felt about being married to men they had never seen, in strange tribes, and I knew they would never tell me through masculine interpreters. Lulash would know.

[156] "But most of the sources of happiness that you mentioned are in the lives of men," I said. "Are the women happy?"

"No," said Lulash.[1] "I do not think our women are happy." He seemed deeply troubled; there were perplexity and anxiety in his dark eyes, and he moved restlessly—which Albanians almost never do—as he sat on the floor by the heap of coals in the baking dish. They had sunk quite into gray ashes; the bleak room was very cold, filled with the ceaseless swishing sound of the rain and of the innumerable waterfalls that poured from the mountains overhead.

"Perhaps I shouldn't be asking him this? Perhaps he is married to an unhappy woman?" I asked.

"No," said Perolli. "He is not married; he is the only man in Shala who is not married."

[593] "Our women have their children; they love their children," said Lulash.[1] "And they do not quarrel with their husbands. It almost never happens that there are ugly words in a family. 531 But I do not think the women are happy. I do not know whether they would be happier if they chose their own husbands. Girls of the marrying age are not very wise. But I often think,

[1] [Tribal chief in [146] Thethis -- Analyst]

when I see a young girl taken away to the house 581 of some old man, who perhaps is sick and ugly and morose because he must stay all day in the house, that it is a sad thing. For myself, I would like to see the American way tried here. I have 582 said to my people that it is wrong to betroth children before they are born. We do not do it very often, now. Usually they are five or six years old, old enough so that one can see what they will become and what they will like. But parents do not often think of those things; they think more of marrying their children into a richer, stronger tribe, so that when war and bad seasons come there will be the strong, rich tribe to help them. Also, it is better for the child who is married into a good tribe. So that parents do not think much about the children themselves; they think more about the family and the tribe."

"Why isn't he married?" I said to Perolli. "Did they give the girl he wanted to some one else?"

"How could they, when he would have been a baby then?" said Perolli, indignant at my stupidity. "No. When he was old enough to marry he paid the girl's family and arranged her marriage to some one else. It is well known why he has not married; he does not want to marry a woman of the mountains, and he knows no other women."

"And in my country," I said to Lulash, "I think it would be better if parents thought more about the young man's family."

581 "Yes," he replied, "if they thought about the character of that family, as they would doubtless do in America. Here, they think more about the lands and herds and strong fighting men that the tribe has. I have often thought at night—for I lie awake a great deal, thinking about my people—that we would have better children if the women were free to choose their own husbands. They would choose men who were young and strong and beautiful. Also the young men would choose the strongest and most beautiful girls. There is another thing, too. I believe there is something like a spirit between two people, something that knows more than their brains do about what their children will be, and that that spirit would lead them into better marriages if they could listen to it. I do not say it very well, because there is no word for it, but I understand it. I would like to see my people try the American way," he repeated.

000 He rose to his six feet of height, splendid in fine white wool and silken sash, the jewel-studded chains clinking together on his chest, and swung the rifle again on his back. "I will go now to my own house," he said. "If the *zaushka* from America would follow me and drink coffee before my fire, the path her feet would take would always be flowery with spring to my eyes."

There is something contagious in that sort of thing. "Say to him that my feet will be happy on the path," I said to the amused Perolli.

"Glory to your lips!" said Lulash. "Glory forever to the little feet that brought you to ooo Thethis!"

The little feet were wearing at that moment two pairs of wrinkled, thick woolen stockings, indescribably ludicrous beneath the flapping legs of trousers around which I had not rewound the soaked woolen leggings, and Perolli and I were helpless with laughter as soon as the door had closed behind Lulash.

"How am I ever going to get to his house?" I asked, wiping my eyes.

"Oh, we'll have somebody make you some goatskin opangi," said Perolli. "He won't expect us very soon." He flung out his arms in a jubilant gesture. "A *besa* of peace from Shala!" he exclaimed. "I couldn't have hoped for that! It means peace through the whole north; it means internal security for northern Albania—if I can only get the other tribes to join it."

Frances and Alex came in, desperately anxious to know what had happened, and we three did a dance of pure delight. It was an inexpressible relief to know that Perolli would get out of Shala alive, and the *besa* was almost too much.

"But, Perolli," said Frances, when I had told 837
the whole conversation, "do you mean to say 628
that these people are—are absolutely moral? I 619
mean, as we understand morality? No love making along all these mountain trails? No illegitimate children? Never?"

"Never? Well, I have heard of one case," said Perolli. "But don't forget that such a

837 thing would mean a blood feud between tribes.
628 No man would make love to a girl of his own
619 tribe, of course; a tribe traces its ancestry back to a common ancestor, and it would be like an American's making love to his own sister. And if he seduced a girl of another tribe he would be involving hundreds of people. Men have to respect women in these mountains; they're killed if they don't, and not only they, but their families. A blood feud is no joke.

"However, I did hear of its happening once. The man's family had to send word to the family of the girl to whom he was betrothed, to say that he could not marry her because he was going to have a child by another woman. The three tribes met in council and prevented a blood feud, but the man's family had to pay his fiancée's tribe ten thousand kronen, and ten thousand kronen to the family of the man that the other girl was engaged to. Then those two married, and the first man married the girl who was going to have his child. But it was a terrible disgrace to both their families.

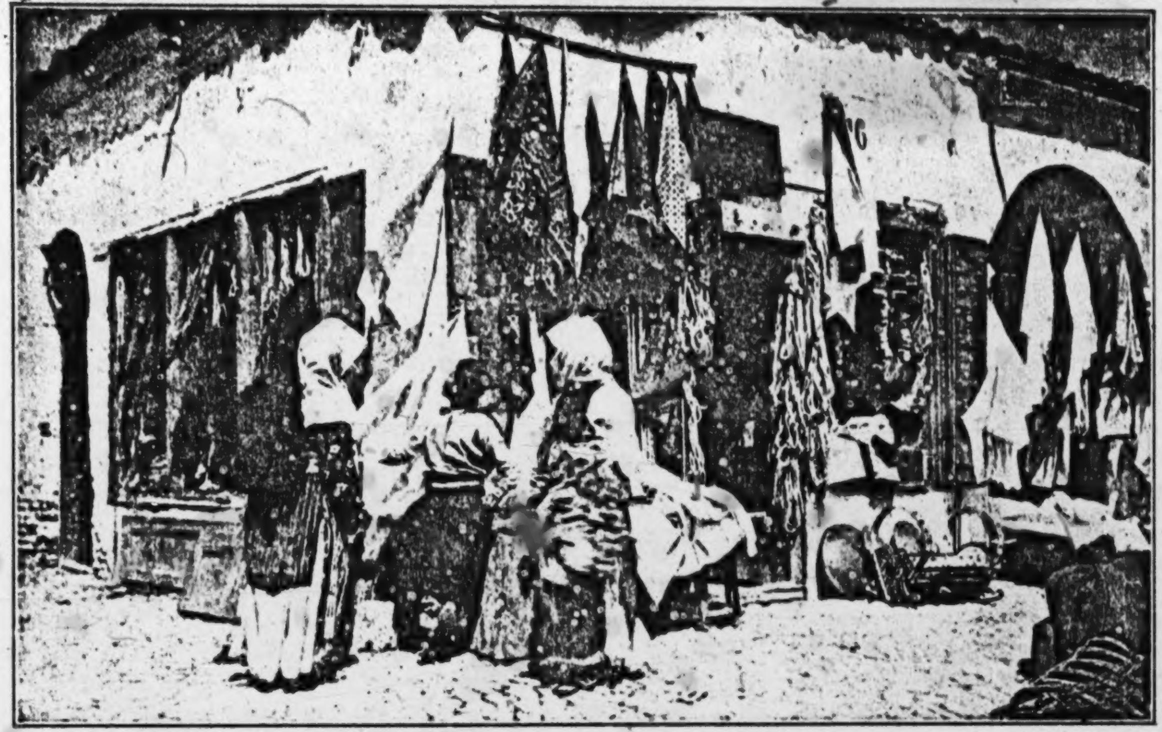
But he cut short our awed admiration for such a rigidly moral community. He was a man of Ipek, educated in Europe, and returned to Tirana, and his attitude to the ignorant tribes of these mountains was not one of admiration.

584 "They are really a wretched lot," he declared.
627 "Now, take a thing like this, for instance." And he told us that in a house a few miles down the valley there was a nine-year-old girl held prisoner. The story was this:

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

443

(150a)



THE SHOPPING CENTER IN TIRANA

These mountain women are admiring the strange weaving and color of bandana handkerchiefs and unbleached muslin from Europe. But they will sigh and content themselves with their own hand-woven silks and cottons, and if they buy anything, it will be the brightly painted cradle. An unbetrothed girl baby who was strapped into so fine a cradle might well hope to be married in Tirana or Scutari.

PEAKS OF SHALA

584 627 A man of Pultit had betrothed his unborn child to the unborn child of a man of Shala, eighteen years ago. The two men, being friends, and one evening drinking rakejia together, had agreed that if one child proved to be a boy and the other a girl, they should marry. The wife of the Pultit man had protested; she did not like the tribe of Shala, and she did not like her husband's friend, perhaps because he was too fond of rakejia. Besides, she was an ambitious woman, and said that if she had a daughter she would marry her in Scutari. Wild, irrational woman! But the compact was made, and nothing was left to her but to hope that both children would be boys, or both girls.

However, she became the mother of a daughter, and the Shala man became the father of a son. The girl was eleven years old, and in a few more years would have been duly married in Shala, when the Serbs and Montenegrins, pouring down over the mountains in the retreat before the Austrians, suddenly invaded Alban~~ia,~~ and in fighting those ancestral enemies the girl's father was killed. The mother immediately took her children and fled to Scutari.

Four years later, the girl now being of marriageable age, Shala sent to Scutari for her, and what was their outrage to discover that the mother not only would not give her up, but had actually betrothed her to a Scutari man! The gendarmes of Scutari make simple and direct justice difficult; mountain law does not apply

584 627 there. Two Shala men made an attempt to carry off the girl, and were captured by superior forces and thrown into jail. Not killed, you perceive, but trapped, and talked over at length, and kept in a cage for some time, and at length freed, all most absurdly and unreasonably. They returned at once to their task, but they found it impossible to seize the girl again. She was closely guarded, not only by her mother, but by the family of the Scutari man to whom she was unjustly betrothed. So, finding that way to justice blocked, the Shala men caught her little sister, eight years old, and triumphantly escaped with her into the mountains.

She was not yet of marriageable age, and the Shala bridegroom must wait another six years, but justice had been done, though imperfectly. Pultit owed him a bride, and a Pultit bride he would have, with patience. The girl was brought to his house, and was even now being kept there, much against her will, while the family waited for her to grow old enough to be married.

000 "Those are things that we must change as soon as the government is strong enough," Perolli said, decisively, and we hoped that the government would be strong enough in time to rescue the girl, though the poor Shala lad, through no fault of his own, seemed doomed to live an unhappy bachelor.

In Padre Marjan's kitchen we found at least twenty visitors from the village; the men were there again, among them all the chiefs but

Lulash. The fireplace was full of bubbling pots ooc and sizzling pans; the padre, helped informally by whoever happened to be nearest, was preparing our luncheon. My dilemma was announced; I stood before them shoeless. A boy ran at once across the village and returned streaming, as though he had been in a river, bringing two pieces of goatskin, tanned with the soft brown hair on it.

To the eager interest of everyone, I set my feet on the pieces, and there were many exclamations of wonder at their smallness and at the curious shape of them, the toes so close together and making a point, instead of arching, each one separately, as the toes of their people do, and they would have been glad to examine them more closely—asking one another, as Rexh explained, if I would or would not take off the strangely woven stockings later. Meanwhile the boy with a nail drew the outlines of my feet on the leather and went away with it to his house, where the opangi would be made.

While this was happening the older men of the tribe went back to the cold bedroom with Perolli, each one adding his own *besa* of loyalty to the one Lulash had sworn, and asking many questions about the aims and strength of the Tirana government. They* would not yet call it the 829
Albanian government; they could not compre- 641
hend the idea of the state, so familiar to us that we never examine it. "Government" meant to them not only the consent of the governed, but the active participation of everyone in govern-

*[men from village of Thethis-- Analyst]

641 829 ing; they had, indeed, no conception of what we mean by "government." When they say "government" they mean what we mean when we say, in a group, "Well, now we're all agreed, let's go on and do it."

185 Perolli spent that morning—and indeed most of his time in the few succeeding days that we were together—trying to explain the idea of a representative government to these simple communist people. And he told us that within six weeks the Albanian government would really come up into the mountains. The plan was to begin by sending into the tribes men from Tirana who could read and write; they would be connecting links between Tirana and the tribes, sitting in all the tribal councils, making reports to Tirana and explaining the wishes of the Tirana parliament to the mountaineers.

000 These men would bring in with them, of course, the private-property ideas of southern Albania (which is just changing from the feudal system to modern capitalism), and I felt a regret, purely romantic, perhaps, at the inevitable disappearance of this last surviving remnant of the Aryan primitive communism in which our own forefathers lived, and at the replacing of Lulash by men like our politicians. I am a conservative, even a reactionary; I should like to keep the Albanian mountains what they are. But no one can stop the changes in human affairs; the eternal swing of the pendulum goes on; we have shop stewards in England and a Plumb plan in

PEAKS OF SHALA

America, and in Thethis, on the headwaters of the Lumi Shala, we shall have agitators for private ownership of land and houses, and—no doubt, in time—for private property in mines and railroads and electric-power plants.

CHAPTER IX

THE CHIEFS OF SHALA PROBATE A WILL—WE VISIT THE HOUSE OF LULASH—A JOURNEY TO UPPER THETHIS.

000 I MAY say that such agitators will have a very bad time of it, as doubtless all agitators deserve to have, since all agitators always have 428 had it. There was a conference that afternoon 794 in the padre's bedroom, and this time it was the padre who wanted the principle of private property established. A man had died and left a piece of land to the Church, and the padre[1] wanted the land to build the school on. Four chiefs of Shala sat beside the desk, on a bench brought in for the purpose, and Padre Marjan, gaunt and earnest in his Franciscan robe, talked the case out before Perolli[2] (Perolli was no longer a hunted man who might be turned over to the Serbs; he was now an honored guest, emissary from an allied tribe, whose words were heard with respect.)

Padre Marjan had written down the testator's dying words in a notebook. He read them, those little mysterious marks on paper. They said that the man had made much land—every foot of earth is made by incredible labor of uprooting bowlders and building stone walls to catch washed-down soil—and he felt that he was leaving 428 794 enough land to the tribe to stand as his contribution, without this one small piece. That piece he wished the tribe to give to the Church.

---

[1] [Padre Marjan of Thethis [156] -- Analyst]

[2] [Secretary of Albanian Ministry of Interior -- Analyst]

There was also a statement from the man's wife, saying that her husband had long wished the Church to have that piece of land, and that she and her children wished it also.

"Those words are written words," said Perolli, gravely, the eyes of all upon him. "Therefore they are holy words; they are as the words of the saints."

"That is doubtless so," said one of the chiefs. "But this man was not a saint, and, besides, how can he give away land? Land belongs to [423] the tribe of Shala."

"It is not as though I wished to take the land from Shala," said Padre Marjan. "I do not want it for myself. I wish to build a school upon it, and the school will be for all the children of Shala. It will be for the good of the tribe, that their children can learn to read and write."

"Glory to your lips," said another chief. "But since it is for the children of Shala, let it be built on the land of Shala. Build our school upon it, and all our tribe will bless you."

"But this man left the land to the Church, for the welfare of his soul. It is written here upon this paper that the land belongs to the Church. It is the Church that will build the school in Thethis; I myself am already teaching your children, and even when the new teacher comes from

428 794 Tirana the school will be under my care. I am the servant of the Church in Thethis, and this land must belong to the Church."

"We will think about it," said the chiefs.

"Shall it be said," demanded the padre, "that the Americans have come from far across strange seas to bring money to build a school for the children of Thethis, and that the people of Thethis will not give even one small piece of land?"

"But," said I to Frances, "why do you want to take land from the tribe and give it to the Church?"

"The Church is the only light they have up here; the only center of inspiration and learning," said Frances. "See how the people come to the padre's kitchen; see what he means to them. I'm not a Catholic, but can't you see that if the school is to be a community center the Church must have it? They don't know how to make it what we want it to be, themselves."

"Very well," said the chiefs. "You may have the land, Padre Marjan."

291 My opangi[1] had arrived. The edges of the leather had been turned upward and joined across the toes by an intricately woven network of rawhide thongs. Another network made a heel piece, and there were thongs to go around the ankles. With the opangi came a pair of short, knitted purple socks reaching just to the ankle, where they ended in points bound with black braid and stiff with gold and silver

[1] [Albanian handmade shoes— Analyst]

embroidery. These were really separate linings 291 to the stiff and hard opangi, which had to be soaked a long time in water and put on wet, in order to get them on at all.

Very conscious of my feet, which seemed large 342 and unwieldy flopping objects at the ends of my legs, I went across the flat, wet fields with Perolli to drink coffee in the house of Lulash.[1]

The house of Lulash was different from any of the others we had seen. It stood on a castlelike rock; we went up to it by a stairway cut in the side of a cliff that rose almost sheer for so far that the waterfall pouring down it looked like a motionless streak of snow near the top. A natural bridge of rock crossed the little space between the cliff and the rock on which the house of Lulash was built; a furious little stream roared beneath us as we crossed the bridge, and then there was another stairway leading up to the house.

Lulash and a dozen men and women of his [574] household stood outside his door to receive us. No rifles were fired. We passed through a double line of salutes and greetings and into a high-arched stone doorway. There was a little hall, floored and walled with stone, and a massive stone stair leading upward. This we climbed, [352] and were in a large whitewashed room, lighted by a window and furnished with beautifully painted chests and a few hand-woven rugs. But this was not the only room; there were others, 000 and, leading us through several arched stone

[1] [tribal chief in Thethis -- Analyst]

○○○ doorways, Lulash brought us into the living room, where I exclaimed, "My house in San Francisco!"

It was exactly the same—long, wide, with the large gray stone fireplace in the center of one wall, folded blankets of goats' wool piled like cushions around it; the alcove where my bookshelves used to be was there—an old carved chest stood in it; and there were my windows, where the nasturtiums used to grow and the orange curtains frame the blues of San Francisco Bay and the Berkeley hills and the sky. I went to those windows at once. But, no, the magic departed; there was only the flat wet lands of Thethis below me, the stone houses and stone fences, and beyond them the blue and purple and white and black and rose color of the snow-crested mountains with a hundred waterfalls. Beautiful, but like the stranger's face that shatters the wild, irrational expectation of having found a friend in an impossible place. I turned my back upon those windows.

But it was, it was the living room that I remembered! The gray walls—but these were of plaster; the black floor; the huge gray stone fireplace. Even the rug on the wall, where my treasured shawl used to be. "It *is* my house!" I said, while Perolli looked as though I had suddenly gone mad, and all the others stood concealing their amazement. "Tell them that it is exactly like my house at home, far away on the other side of the world," And I sat down on a

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

pile of folded blankets before the fire, not yet ooo sure that I was not dreaming and that the strange chests and stranger figures of turbaned men and barbarically dressed barefooted women would not vanish when I awoke.

"I did not think," said Lulash, "that any of our houses would be as fine as an American house." He was so pleased that his hand quivered a little on the long handle of the tiny brass pot in which he was making the coffee. So I told them that only our finest houses are of stone, that my house was of wood, and much smaller than his. But all our houses had windows, I said.

"Yes," said Lulash, wistfully "Windows are 342
very good; I always wish that all our houses had 619
windows. But first we must have a *besa* of peace among all the tribes; it is not safe now to have windows, a man never knows when his tribe will be 'in blood' and enemies will shoot him through windows. You see that mine are so placed that it would be difficult to shoot through them, and I have heavy shutters for closing them at night, when the firelight makes it easier to see us from outside."

But he was pleased that I praised his windows; he had gone through many other tribes and down into Scutari to bring up the glass of which he had heard, and made them with his own hands. They were on leather hinges so that they would open and let in the air; he said he had observed that sunshine and air were good things, 342 and, if good outdoors, why not good in houses? 619 "But it will be a long time before my people can have windows,' he said, sadly.

He did not think it was good to keep the sheep and goats with the family, either; all his flocks were driven at night into their own quarters, on the lower floor of the house.

000 Houses are the most endless subject in the world; all of humanity and its history is expressed in houses, and while the coffee cup was passed back and forth I told about American houses; about the log cabins of the pioneers, such a little time ago as crude as those of the Albanians; about the loophole glassless windows, and the pegs on which rifles were hung; and about farmers' houses in New England, where the cattle live under the same roof, at the end of long sheds; and suburban houses with gardens, and apartment houses where whole tribes of people live, going up and down in movable rooms. And then I spoke about water power and said that it became electricity—Lulash asked me eagerly how it was done, but I did not know—and that brought us to the whole subject of machinery. I drew a picture of a spinning wheel for them and explained it, but they said it would not be practicable on the trails, where the women did most of the spinning; a woman could not carry her baby in its cradle and a spinning wheel, too; the spindle was better; and I agreed with them. But if men and women did not work so hard carrying water from the springs, they would

have time to sit in the house and work a spinning wheel, and I said that water could come into houses in pipes, and Lulash and I discussed for some time how a hollowed-out log could bring part of the waterfall into his house. But he said regretfully that a log was so expensive; cutting a tree meant destroying so much pasture for the goats, and it took a long time for a tree to grow again. And I saw how princely had been his gift of a hundred trees to be burned to make the lime to make the mortar to make the schoolhouse, and the infinite labor of such a life made me realize the stupendous obstacles mankind has overcome in climbing out of it. And I thought that it was the long struggle to wrest from the unwilling earth the material necessities of human life that turned humanity's terrific energy in the course it still follows, though the need for it is past, and that perhaps some day this energy, turned into other channels, will make the life of civilized man as rich in spiritual and emotional values as it now is in material things.

The gay Cheremi, bringing our breakfast of Turkish coffee next morning, spoke with proud nonchalance in English. "Padre gone," said he. "When wake, no padre. He is went."

The import of these words came slowly to us. Awakening in that chill room, to find ourselves between crimson sheets, beneath blankets of woven goat's hair, and to see the scarlet-sashed, scalplocked Cheremi bearing the brass tray with its coffee cups, had always a quality of unreality. It was not so much an awakening from dreams as to them. In the transition from unconsciousness to consciousness we must traverse so many centuries to feel at home, that we arrived a little breathless.

But, "The padre gone?" Frances cried, after an instant. And we sat dumb, staring at Cheremi's beaming. Any impossibility was probable; we did not question that the padre had disappeared in some strange fashion, and our minds, while we hurriedly dressed, were not concerned with the manner of his going so much as with what we should do without him. We were prepared to deal gallantly with the catastrophic emergency, as the walker up stairs in the dark is prepared for the last step, which is not there.

For when we found Perolli squatting by the kitchen fireplace, busy with long-handled coffee pot and spoon, he confirmed Cheremi's report absent-mindedly. "Mmmhm. He went at dawn. Off to hear confessions in upper Thethis. Getting ready for Easter. More coffee?"

He seemed more abstracted than this anticlimax justified, and we drank coffee again, in silence. The kitchen was dismal, a poor and wretched place without Padre Marjan. Rain was pouring steadily outside, and the house was filled with roar of waterfalls as a shell is filled with sound of the sea. In those moments of cold gray light by the fire which was dying slowly under hissing raindrops, I realized the courage and endurance of Padre Marjan—of all the priests who, in these mountains, keep alight a warmth and gayety of spirit for their people.

"I'm going to upper Thethis myself," said Perolli, at length. "Like to come along? We've been invited to visit Sadiri Luka, the richest man in the Five Tribes."

We roused ourselves with some little effort, for the grayness of the day, the chill, and the ceaseless sound of pouring water were like an actual weight on muscles. We swept the floor painstakingly and long, with the pine bough. We went down the draughty stairs and out into the downpour to bring back a wooden bucket of water; we tried to stir the sullen embers into a blaze to warm it; we gave up in despair and washed the coffee cups in water cold and sooty. We made the beds; we went up and down the stairs, bringing water, emptying wash basins, carrying ashes and wet wood. Our admiration and reverence for Padre Marjan grew like Jonah's gourd while we did these things, which he does every day before beginning his work. At last we set out, opangi laced and staffs in hand, to go to upper Thethis.

A day of comparative dryness had broken our fishlike habits, and water seemed again an unkind element in which to be moving. Crossing the flat valley in single file, accompanied by the sucking, slushy sound of water-filled stockings, 000 we said little. The sheets of rain blurred our sight, and the sound of it dulled our hearing. But when we began cautiously to climb the slippery trail that edged up the mountain side, exercise had begun to warm us, and we escaped from the silence which is to human beings a more unfamiliar element than water.

421 "How can he[1] be the richest man in the Five Tribes? I thought these people were communistic," said Alex.

"The tribes own only lands and houses and most of the forests," said Perolli. "A man or a family can own flocks, or buy and sell when they 361 go down to the cities. Sadiri Luka's the richest man because he went down to Ipek. He was a merchant there, and everyone is rich in Ipek. How I wish I might show you that valley, my own valley—it is more beautiful than you can imagine. There are such rich fields—the cows stand knee deep there in greenness like a carpet—and the best fruits of all the Balkans grow there. And butter, and honey, and fine flour, and quantities of the finest wool that makes the beautiful rugs of my people—there is everything in Ipek that you could wish to have, and both hands running over. I mean," he added, grimly, "there *was*. Yes, Ipek was a rich and happy 000 place before the Serbs came. And if Sadiri Luka——" He broke off, on such a savage note that we were startled.

"You see," he resumed with a note of eagerness, stopping to point with his staff, "just over

[1] [Sadiri Luka of upper Thethis -- Analyst]

that mountain—no, that one, farthest east— well, just over that mountain, and down through a little gorge where there will be violets soon, and then around the curve of the hills, there begins my valley of Ipek. In four hours I could go there. I know every step of the way. My father and my mother are there, and I am the only son, and I have not seen them for two years, nor my houses, nor my fields. And I could go there in four hours."

"Do you suppose," said Frances, nervously, "that the Serbs have field-glasses? If they had, Rrok, they could recognize you from their lines up there. They might be looking at you right now."

"If they even had any code of honor," he continued, not heeding her, "if they had any proper respect for women, I could go straight through their lines with you girls beside me, and I could go to see my people, and I could show you what a country Albanians make when they only have land to work, and we could come back again—we could do it all in one day. There is not a tribe in our mountains who would not let a Serb come and go in safety, with a woman beside him. But the Serbs—— And Christ tells us to love our enemies! How can we? How *can* we?"

It was the unanswerable passionate question, and we did not try to answer it. We went on, the little valley of Thethis narrowing below us, till mountain overlapped mountain, and the gorge between was filled with a foam-white green

PEAKS OF SHALA

000 river. From time to time we struggled through a waterfall, and there was one huge torrent that, leaping from a cliff above the trail, arched over it in a curve that seemed solid as glass, and we
361 passed beneath it. Then, descending, we came to the little valley of upper Thethis. Perhaps six or ten houses were scattered there, among broken-off fragments of cliff as large as they, and between them all the level land was glistening with water at the grass roots.

[342] The house of Sadiri Luka was notable for its stone-walled courtyard and its broad balcony. The heavy arch of the gateway was mediæval in its grim solidity; we escaped from the rain to the peace of its shelter, and there were welcomed
[291] by Sadiri Luka. He was middle-aged, sturdy, even a little stodgy of figure, among the lithe mountaineers, and this appearance suggested the successful business man—a suggestion incongruous with his picturesque clothes. His trousers were the purest white that new wool can be, his fringed jacket the densest black, the colors of his sash were clear and gay, and his silver chains were massive. There was even a heavy silver ring on his finger. And there was no rifle on his back.

343 The courtyard was a litter of cornstalks, almost entirely covered with a roof of woven branches; evidently it was the home of flocks now out in the rain attended by a shepherd cutting leaves for them. An arched doorway opened into the first floor of the house, where we saw a pensive donkey gazing profound[168]ly upon the liquid gray weather -- Analyst]

donkey gazing profoundly upon the liquid gray weather. 000

Obviously this was a rich house, and we followed Sadiri Luka[1] expectantly, up the stone stairs and down a long hall mysterious with closed doors, to a large room full of color. There were rugs on the stone floor, rugs on the stone walls, floor cushions covered with rugs in front of the fireplace. There was no other furniture save a row of old rifles on a wall. Their slender four-foot-long barrels were inlaid with silver, their curved thin butts were of silver chased and enameled, their triggers were intricate flint-lock affairs, and we tore our eyes from them with a wrench, to reply with proper courteousness to the welcome of our host. 353

While he made the coffee a woman came quietly through the door beside the fireplace and greeted us with poised and gracious dignity—one of those many beautiful Albanian women who, because they were so poised and so silent, remain a background for all our memories of the mountains, more mysterious behind their level eyes and courteous phrases than Turkish women behind their veils.

Sitting on the cushions, we drank the coffee and the rakejia, from time to time responding to the greeting of other guests come to meet us. Perolli was quiet, fallen into one of the moods which we had learned not to interrupt with requests for interpreting. There was constraint in the atmosphere, and when, presently, he fell into low-voiced talk with Sadiri Luka, we tactfully engaged the others in such conversation as occurred to us. I forget how it happened that we first mentioned the ora. There were, of course, ora in Thethis, we were told, but no one remembered any news of interest concerning them. Then, prompted by the incessant sound of rushing water, we inquired if there were ora of the waters as well as of the forests.

---

[1] [In upper Thethis--Analyst]

"The old men know these things," said a handsome youth, somewhat bored. He was a traveled young man; he had been in Budapest and Bucharest, and spoke their languages as well as German and Italian, and—from wherever gotten—he wore an American army shirt. Ora did not interest him. "Old man," said he, politely, turning to an aged chief beside him, "what do you know of the water ora?"

The old man took the amber mouthpiece of his long cigarette holder from his shrunken lips and blew a reflective cloud of smoke. The alert Rexh produced my notebook and fountain pen from his pajama pocket, laid them beside me, and leaned forward, attentive.

CHAPTER X

THE WATER ORA OF MALI SHARIT—THE COMING OF THE TRIBES TO EUROPE BEFORE THE SEAS WERE BORN, AND HOW THE FIRST GREEKS CAME IN BOATS—WHY ALEXANDER THE GREAT WAS BORN IN EMADHIJA, AND OF HIS JOURNEY TO MACEDONIA—THE SAD HOUSE OF KOL MARKU.

"THE water ora were an ancient race," 776
said the old man. "They were here 539
before the ora of the forests. I do not think there are very many of them left, and no man has seen them in my time, nor in the time of my father. [619] But very long ago, before the tribes of Shala, Shoshi, and Pultit were founded by the three brothers from the land that is now the Merdite country, there was a man of their tribe who caught a water ora. It is a very old song, and much of it has been forgotten, but the man was a man from the Mali Sharit, and by three days he missed becoming the king of the world. In my father's time the thing that happened to him was still sung. I heard that song when I was a child, but I have forgotten the words of it. I remember only the thing that happened.

"The man of Mali Sharit went every day to the wood on the mountain, and in that wood was

776 a lake, small, but like the sky in clearness. I do
539 not know why he went; he was probably laying by green leaves to feed his sheep in the winter. But it happened that one day while he worked he saw a very beautiful girl lift her head from that clear water and look carefully in every direction. He was hidden by low leaves and she did not see him. When she saw no one, she came from the water into the sunshine, and danced in the sunshine. When she had danced until she wished no longer to dance, she went again into the water. The man of Mali Sharit went to the pool and looked into it, and it was like the sky in clearness.

"The next day this happened, and the next, and on the evening of the third day the man of Mali Sharit went to a wise old woman and told her what he had seen. He said: 'I am thirsty for this girl. If I cannot marry her I will marry no one and have no sons. Tell me what I can do.'

"The old woman thought, and said: 'I will tell you what to do. To-morrow you shall take to the edge of the pool a silver mirror and lay it beside the pool. And you shall take a rope and tie yourself round and round with your back against a tree trunk. And you shall stay there without moving while the girl comes from the pool and goes into it again. Then come and tell me what you saw.'

"The man of Mali Sharit did this. When the girl came from the water and saw the mirror she looked into it for a long time. Then she saw

the man of Mali Sharit where he stood tied to 776
the tree, and quickly she went back into the 539
water. That day she had not danced.

"In the evening the old woman said: 'It is good. For three days you shall do again as you have done to-day. On the third day, lay beside the mirror a dress of white silk in which there has been cut no opening for the head to go through. The girl will put this on, in order to see it upon her in the mirror. But when her head is inside it, while she tries to find the opening that is not there, then loosen your ropes and leap quickly, and take her to your house as your wife.'

"All that the old woman had said was wise, and the man of Mali Sharit took the ora of the pool to his house as his wife. But that is not the end of the song."

The old man paused to adjust a freshly rolled 000
cigarette in his silver holder. For a moment pale sunshine came through the slits of windows in bars of light across the colored rugs and the mass of loungers upon them; it struck a sparkle here and there from revolver hilt and silver chain. Then it went out, and only the firelight richly accented the duskiness. There was a constant coming and going on the long balcony outside the windows, for behind one of the closed doors Padre Marjan was hearing confessions and giving absolution or penance for sins.

"It's like some old, half-forgotten story," I said, puzzled. "I remember it, but only as he tells it."

000 "Mmmh. So do I," said Alex. "I can't just remember what comes next."

"*Asht shum i buker* (It is very beautiful)," I said to the old man. "And what was the end of the song?"

539
776 "The man of Mali Sharit kept in his house the ora of the pool," the old man continued, "and she was his wife. For six months he was not unhappy, for she was beautiful and she was good, but he longed to hear her speak. And when the six months of humbleness and modesty were gone and the time had come for her to laugh and be gay in his house, she was still silent. The man of Mali Sharit worked hard for her. He brought her fine wool to weave and he made a most beautiful cradle painted with figures of animals and of birds and of fishes, for he remembered that she was of the water. But when he gave her the wool she said nothing, and when he showed her the cradle she was silent. He said to her, 'Tell me what you want, that I may get it for you,' and she did not answer. He went into the woods to a place he knew, and fought the wild bees and brought her honey, and she ate the honey, smiling, but still she did not speak. He did other things that I do not remember; he did everything that his mind could devise, to make her break that stillness, and she did not. His home was always very still, and he was troubled. And when their son was born she loved the child, but she made no sound when he was born and she made no song when she nursed him.

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

"And when a year had gone by since their 776
marriage he could endure this stillness no longer. 539
He went to the wise old woman and told her this and asked her how to make his wife speak.

"The old woman thought, and said, 'You will kill a sheep and take the bladder of the sheep and fill it with its blood. Secretly put the bladder into the cradle of the child. To-night speak sternly to your wife and command her to speak. If she does not answer, take your knife and say to her, 'Speak, or I will kill the child.' If then she does not speak, strike with your knife into the cradle and cut the bladder. When she sees the blood your wife will speak.'

"The man of Mali Sharit went with a heavy heart and a dark mind and did as the old woman had told him. He said to his wife, 'Speak!' and she was silent. He took out his knife and showed it to her, and she was silent. He laid his hand upon the cradle, he said he would kill the child, and she looked at him with terrible eyes and was silent. Then he struck, and the blood came red upon the blankets, and she spoke.

"She spoke with a sob and a scream. She lifted the cradle in her arms, and she said, 'Had you been patient for three days longer, I could have made you king of the world.' Then she wept, and her tears became a fountain, and the fountain became a mist, and the mist was gone. The man of Mali Sharit never saw his wife again, and as for the child, in three days he died. And I do not know what became of the man of Mali Sharit."

539 In my disappointment I spoke too quickly, forgetting the excellence of Rexh as an interpreter. "It isn't Albanian, after all; it's Greek," I said. "I remember now that I read it years ago."

"Yes, so do I," said Alex, and her words crossed those of Rexh, who had picked up mine and was turning them into Albanian.

"*Po,*" said the old man, with irony. "It is a Greek song—it is as Greek as Lec i Madhe."

[186] I had thanked the old man with an insult, for even the Ghegs keep smoldering in their hearts the knowledge that the Greeks hold Janina, and the memory of the burned villages and slaughtered Albanians of Epirus is only six years old. In an unguarded instant I had made for myself one of those recollections that burn in sleepless night hours. I called myself a fool, while I heard my voice trying to bury the irremediable mistake by
173 hurried words. "What is Lec i Madhe?"

186 Frances and Alex were busy in a scrap bag of mythology, and Rexh replied. "I don't know what you call him in English, Mrs. Lane. Lec i Madhe was our king of very long years ago, who went down from the mountains and took all the cities of the world. He was the son of our twentieth king, and he was a very great fighter. I think surely you must know him by some name in English. We call him Lec i Madhe; it means, the Great Lec. Because we had other kings before him called Lec."

"Lec i Madhe?" cried Frances, headlong at

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGI Albania EGI

Once a week she comes walking over fifteen miles of mountain trails, to be ready for business bright and early on Bazaar Day. This week she has brought jars of kos (the thickened but not soured milk that she makes by putting three sprigs of grape vine into the boiled milk) and plums and baskets, and on the way she has been knitting. When she finishes the gay sock pinned to her jacket she will sell that, too.

443

[1760]

173 the word. "Alexander the Great! What are
186 they saying about him?"

The young man in the American army shirt had listened not at all to the story of the ora, but he heard Frances's words and misunderstood them. "Alexander the Greek?" he repeated. "Alexander was not Greek; he was Albanian."

"You mean his mother was an Albanian," said Frances.

The young man smiled scornfully. "And you think his father was not? When has a king of Albania married a foreign wife? Albanians marry Albanians. When Filip the Second married, he married a woman of his own people, but of another tribe, as the custom has always been. Do the Greeks dare to say that Filip was a Greek? If he had been Greek, no Albanian chief would have given him a daughter for wife. Even then we Malisori[1] despised the Greeks."

"But Philip of Macedonia—was a Macedonian," I said, feebly. "Wasn't he a Macedonian? The Macedonians weren't Albanians, were they?"

"Ask the old man what he knows about Lec i Madhe, Rexh," said Frances. But the old man, drawing solace from the amber mouthpiece with his toothless lips, still brooded upon the song of the man of Mali Sharit.

"The things which I have told happened to an Albanian of the tribe of the Mali Sharit," he said. "The song of them has been sung by the

---

[1] Mountaineers.

173 186 Malisori[1] from the days when they happened till the days of my own father's manhood. The Greeks are a little, inquisitive people who have played with paper and with writing since they first came to our shores in boats, long ago—a hundred hundred years before the Romans came. We gave them shelter then, we let them come to our shores, we let them come from the cold seas and stay on our land, and they are guests who steal from their hosts. They have killed our people; they have taken Janina. Let them leave our songs and our kings alone. Greek!" said he, muttering. "They will be claiming the Mali Shoshit, next!"

000 Excitement so shook my fingers that the writing wavers on the page. The blotted and rain-smeared notebook before me now evokes like a crystal before the gazer the picture of that old man in the warm duskiness of the house of Sadiri Luka, the streaming of rain on the roof, the smell of coffee and cigarette smoke, the soft sound of moccasined feet going down the corridor to confession at the knee of Padre Marjan.

173 "The Greeks came to your shores?" I[1] said, goading the old man on. "But it is written in the books that they came from the lands watered by the Danube, by the river that flows through Belgrade to the Black Sea. It is written that they came down through the Balkans to build their great and beautiful cities on the shores of the Ægean. And no one writes about the Albanians. Where did the Albanians come from?"

[1] [Author -- Analyst]

These words created a perceptible sensation. 173 Hazel eyes and blue eyes turned upon me in amazement. A middle-aged man who had come from the room of confession to stack his rifle with others beside the fireplace and to roll a cigarette stopped with the tobacco half poured and stared at me. "It is not written where the Shqiptars came from?" said he, in a tone of stupefaction. "But surely all the world knows where the Shqiptars came from."

I assured him that it was written only that the Greeks, when they came, found some savage tribes whose origin was unknown. But it was thought that these tribes were old peoples of Europe who died out when the peoples of to-day came—I stopped, to give them no clew to the migrations of Aryans from India—who died out, I said, when the great civilizations of to-day came into the world. And the first of these civilizations was the Greek.

The newcomer finished his cigarette thoughtfully, put it in its holder, lighted it from a coal, and summed up his conclusions in an Albanian proverb. "It is very true," said he, "that only the spoon knows what is in the dish."

"And when we speak of the Greeks," said [186] another chief, "let us remember the saying of our fathers: The tree said to the wood cutter, 'Why do you kill me, for I have done nothing to you.' And the wood cutter replied, 'You gave me the handle for the ax.'"

The old man's irritation had died. He looked

173 upon us now with pity, as ones who had offended because of ignorance. “If the American *zonyas* wish to know what we have learned from our fathers, who learned it from their fathers and their fathers’ fathers, I will speak,” he said. “All these things are very old, and none of them are written in books, therefore they are true. I am an old man, and I have seen that when men go down to the cities to learn what is in the books they come back scorning the wisdom of their fathers and remembering nothing of it, and they speak foolishly, words which do not agree with one another. But the things that a man knows because he has seen them, the things he considers while he walks on the trails and while he sits by the fires, these things are not many, but they are sound. Then when a man is lonely he puts words to these things and the words become a song, and the song stays as it was said, in the memories of those who hear it. Like the song of the man of Mali Sharit. These things in our songs are therefore true, for I know many songs about many things, but no song shows that another song is a liar.

“Now it has always been said in our songs that the Shqiptars came long ago from the east, from a crowded country beyond the eastern mountains. There was no water in the Black Sea then. The people came across mountain and valley, in many tribes. It was a land of great animals, good to eat when they were killed. These peoples—we were not then called Shqiptars, but each tribe had its own name, the name 173 of its chief—these peoples who were our fathers' fathers took all the land from the river in the north, that flows to-day through Belgrade, to the plains in the south that are now a sea.

"I do not know how long they lived here before the valleys became seas. There was a rain that was like the rain that is falling now, and there was a water that came up from the earth to meet it. And then there were the seas, on the east and the west and the south, and many tribes, many large tribes, were drowned in them. My grandfather told me this, and he said that his grandfather said there had been a song with the names of all these lost tribes, a song of mourning for the tribes that were eaten by the seas. But the grandfather of my grandfather had not heard that song. New songs come all the time and old songs are forgotten, and we have had much to mourn since the forgotten tribes ceased to be living men.

"But this you must understand. It was after the seas came that the Greeks came. They came in boats across the seas, and they were strange peoples that we had never seen before, speaking a strange tongue. Their boats came to the shores in the south, and our fathers had never seen boats. That was the coming of the Greeks. They came, and came again, and stayed, and built cities. The fathers of the Shqiptars stayed on the mountains and watched them, and went down and gave them gifts. We did not kill them, 173 as we might have done when they were few and weak and there were no Five Powers.

"The Greeks were always a soft people—except one tribe of them, whose name I do not remember. There was one tribe of good fighting men. But most of the Greeks were plainsmen. From the first, they loved to sit and think, to talk, and to write, and to read to one another what they had written. That was their pleasure.

"For this reason, all mountain men who liked to take their pleasure in that way went down to their cities and learned from the Greeks how to write, and having learned, they stayed there and wrote, and read what they had written, and in this way their days passed and no songs were sung about them. But the Greeks did not come to the mountains. When at last the mountain men went down to Greece behind their king, then there was no more Greece. And for these many years of years there would be no Greece if the Five Powers would take their hands from the Balkans."

The old man did not speak without interruption. There were promptings and contributions from his listeners, and now and then a question from us. And he had to be brought back to Lec i Madhe, for the politics of his own lifetime were fresher in his mind and more stirring to his emotions.

"Lec i Madhe was not a wise man like his father, but he was a chief and a fighter, and a leader of great fighters," said he. "There were twenty-one kings before his father, who were kings of all the tribes from the Black Sea to the Adriatic, north of the tribes of Greeks. The kingdom was made by Karanna, who was a foreign chief from the eastern shores of the Black Sea. He came over the sea and made the united kingdom, and its capital was the city Emadhija.[1] After him came these kings: Cenua, Trimi, Perdika, Argua, Filip, Ajeropi, and Ajeropi was the first king whose family was of the pure blood of our fathers who came first from the east. After him there were these kings: Alqeti the son of Ajeropi; Aminti the son of Alqeti, who was the ally of Darius the king of Persia. Then Lec the son of Aminti; Perdika i dyte, the son's son of Perdika, Arqelloja the son of Lec; Oresti the son of Perdika i dyte; Arqelloja i dyte the son of Arqelloja; Armint' i dyte the son of Arqelloja i dyte; Pafsania who was a foreigner; Armint' i trete, the son of Armint' i dyte; Lec i dyte, the son of Armint' i trete; Ptolemeoja, who was a foreigner; Perdika i trete, of the family of Perdika; Armint' i katerte, the son of Lec i dyte; Filip i dyte, the son of Lec i dyte, and Lec i Madhe, the son of Filip i dyte. After Lec i Madhe was Filip i trete——"

But here the genealogy breaks off, for we wished to hear more of Lec i Madhe, and we never came back to the story of his successors.

"Lec i Madhe was born at Emadhija in the

---

[1] The great city.

173 Mati," began the old man, and was interrupted by three small shrieks of excitement.

"Alexander the Great born in Albania!" we exclaimed. "But—but it is written that he was born in Macedonia!"

"There were at that time two capitals of the united kingdom," said the old man. "There was Pela, between Salonika and Monastir, and there was Emadhija, the old capital, lying in the valley which is now the Mati. In Pela and in Emadhija Filip the Second had great houses, and sometimes he was in Pela and sometimes in Emadhija. There was a trouble between Filip the Second and his wife, because she loved Emadhija and would not go with him to Pela. She went, it is true, but she did not want to. And there was trouble between them because of a Greek woman of Pela. I do not know the song, but I think that it was fancy and foolishness, for Filip the Second was a good man and a wise king. But this is true, that before Lec i Madhe was born his mother left Pela and came back to the city Emadhija, and it was in Emadhija that Lec i Madhe was born, and there he lived until he was out of the cradle. He rode on a horse when he first went down to Pela, and Filip the Second came out from Pela to meet him, and it was from the back of a horse that Lec i Madhe first saw his father.

"And it is said that when Lec i Madhe rode down from Emadhija with his mother and many chiefs of the Malisori they passed through the valley of Bulqis, where there are springs of 173 strange waters, and that as they passed through the forest—there was in those days a great forest in the Bulqis, where now there are fields of grain—they rested by one of the springs, in the place where the great rocks are standing in rows. There they heard a sound of singing in a strange tongue, but the end of the song they understood, and the end of the song was, 'Long live Lec, the son of Filip i dyte, Lec i Madhe, the king of the world!'[1]

---

[1] This story was told me in upper Thethis in the spring of 1921. In 114 the summer of 1922 I visited the Mati, accompanied by Annette Marquis 101 and Rrok Perolli. The Mati is a fertile high plateau defended by an unbroken ring of almost impassable mountains. It has never been conquered by foreign armies, though assailed by Romans, Turks, and Serbs; through 1920 and 1921 the men of Mati successfully defended their lands with their rifles against Serbian artillery. The present Prime Minister of the Albanian republic, Ahmet Bey Mati (or Ahmet Zogu, as he endeavors to persuade the people to call him, since the abolition of titles in Albania) is chief of the family which has ruled the Mati since Albania's quarter century of freedom under Scanderbeg, in the fifteenth century.

We were the first foreigners who had ever entered the Mati. We found the country, the people, and the customs quite different from those of the Dukaghini tribes described in this book, excepting only the unvarying Albanian hospitality. We visited the Bulqis, very terribly devastated by the invading Serbs in 1920 and 1921, and partly circled the city of Dibra, taken from Albania by the 1913 frontier line as a knife takes out the eye of a potato. The Albanian frontier commission of the League of Nations was at that time sitting in Scutari, and I regret that commissions do not sometimes travel along the frontiers they have made.

As to the story of Lec i Madhe, we drank the delicious waters of the many strangely flavored springs of Bulqis, and we lunched in the "place where the great rocks are standing in rows." These stones resemble those 172 of Carnac and Stonehenge, though on a much smaller scale, and they may be relics of peoples who lived here prior to the arrival of the Albanians, or they may be a curious accident of geological formation.

On the site of the city Emadhija we found traces which seemed to us undeniably left by the work of human hands. They lie at the head of a valley in a flat triangular space formed by meeting mountain chains,

*[See cat. 173, pp. 176-187 [185] -- Analyst]

173 "Filip the Second was very proud of his son, and his pride led him to the one great foolishness of a good and wise king. He said that he would make Lec i Madhe king of the world, and that was well enough, but he thought that to be king of the world a man must be more learned than he himself. Whereas all old men who have watched the ways of the world know that to be strong and ruthless will make a man powerful, but to be learned makes a man full of dreams and hesitations. In his pride and blindness, Filip the Second sent to Greece for an Albanian who had learned the ways of the Greeks, and to that man he gave the boy, to be taught books."

"Really, this is too much!" said Alex. "Aristotle an Albanian?"

"Yes," continued the old man, taking the

172 [continued from footnote, pp. 185--Analyst]

one day's journey from Kruja, the magnificent fifteenth-century fortress built by Scanderbeg. One side of this triangular space is the bed of a small stream, flowing against the base of the mountains; on the opposite side, a stone conduit brings water from a spring several miles distant to a fountain from which the village people still draw their drinking water. The present village is on the mountain side above the site of the city. The villagers say that the conduit was built by Filip the Second.

Of Emadhija itself nothing remains but a city pattern drawn on the sterile level land by lines of stones. These lines are fairly regular, four to six feet in width and two to three feet high; they form squares and oblongs, arranged in curving rows, like plans of houses and courtyards following winding streets. The stones, though much weathered and broken, are in general rough cubes, and they are black, while the stones of the river bed are white and gray limestone. Unfortunately, none of our party had any archæological knowledge, but our untrained observations convinced us that a city had undoubtedly existed there at some time long past, and we believed that we saw the tops of walls which had been buried by centuries of erosion from the adjacent mountains. The villagers of that part of the Mati speak of the place indifferently as "the ancient city Emadhija," and "the birthplace of Lec i Madhe."

amber mouthpiece from his lips and tranquilly answering the sound of the name, "his name was Aristotle, and he was from a family of the tribe of Ajeropi, his father having gone to a village in Macedonia and become a merchant there. Being rich, he sent his son, who was fond of thought rather than of action, to learn the Greek ways of thinking. And it was this man who was brought back by Filip the Second to teach his son, though there were many chiefs of the Malisori who could have shown him how to be a man and a leader of men.

"The end of it was that Lec i Madhe became the king of the world. Is that written in the books? *Po?* Is it also written that he was made king of the world by the chiefs of the Malisori who had loved his father, and that Lec i Madhe himself was no man, nor ruler of men? Is it written that when the Malisori came back to their mountains after following Lec i Madhe to the ends of the earth they sang a song saying it was good that the eyes of Filip the Second were closed forever, that they might not shed tears of shame for his son? Is it written that this harm was done to the Shqiptars by a man who had gone down to the cities to learn from the Greeks to despise his own people?"

"No," I said, "it is not exactly written so."

But there were expostulations from some who, as Albanians, were proud of Lec i Madhe and would cry down this attack on their most renowned king, and objections from others who

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

173 contended that the old man was right, and all these were silenced by the entrance of Padre Marjan, whose pale, fervent face and gentle voice brought us back to the present.

He was given the place of honor among these of his flock whom he had shriven, and Sadiri Luka hastened from the withdrawn corner where he had been talking with Perolli to make with his own hands a cup of coffee for the padre. When the readjusted group was settled again, and we had replied to Padre Marjan's questions about our morning and our journey, I asked him whether Aristotle was an Albanian. He said, yes. I asked him then about the migration of the first Albanians and the coming of the Greeks in boats, and he said he believed these stories to be true. It was strange, I said, that the historians of the west, the Greek scholars of the universities, could be so misled. Padre Marjan smiled.

"All these old things are debatable, of course," he said, "and it must be remembered that Greeks and Hellenized Albanians wrote all the records. We Albanians have given no material to scholars. Besides, is it strange that they should be mistaken about the lives of men who died thirty centuries ago, when they are mistaken even about their own times? In the same books which say that the Greeks were shepherds from the Danube you will read that the Albanians of to-day are Mohammedans, or brigands, or both."

000 This was so true that I was silent, and, loung-

ing comfortably upon the cushions, I smoked and watched the firelight run nimbly along silver chains and leap from cigarette holder to knife hilt with every slight movement of the entangled bodies around us. Padre Marjan spoke of the unimportance of past glories and shames, of the new dawn of liberty for Albania which brought responsibilities and duties, and of the importance of eternal things, of goodness, strength, and courage, given by God to man for man to use. For, said he, the knife in its scabbard cuts no leaves to feed the flocks, and the goodness of man when not used for those around him becomes a rusty knife, which is of value to no one.

His voice was tense in its softness, and, looking at his wasted face and feverish eyes, I thought, "This man is wearing himself out, here in these mountains, unknown, alone—for he must be starving for the companionship of equals; it is lonely to be always the superior—and when he has burned to ashes he will lie in a grave beside some village church, under a wooden cross from which the rain will wash his painted name long before the wood decays. There are so many of those little graves that the rain has made nameless and that no one visits except the nibbling sheep searching for a grass blade." And I wondered where Lec i Madhe lay buried, for, after all, all men wear themselves out, or are worn out by the years, and the difference between the king of the world and the priest of Thethis is nothing to the rain. Then Padre Marjan gave back the

000 empty coffee cup to Sadiri Luka, saying, "*Per te mire* (All good to you)," and rose. He would not stay to share the food which the women were even then bringing, for there was a sick man in upper Thethis, too ill to come to confession, who had sent, begging the padre to come to him. The sick man's son waited for him at the door, and two chiefs laced his opangi, gave him his staff, and went with him a little way on the trail.

574
264 It was midafternoon, and since early morning the women had been preparing the feast they offered us.[1] A special dispensation had been asked, and granted by Padre Marjan, for that feast, for though this was Lent, we were not Catholics, and never before had Americans been guests in upper Thethis. Far and wide the rumor had gone that in our own tribe we were daughters of chiefs, and it was with apologies that the village offered us its best.

When we had washed our hands in water poured from a silver pitcher, and dried them on a towel of white silk, a large brass tray was set on four midget legs in the midst of our cushions, and the other guests withdrew to places near the walls. Much urging persuaded Sadiri Luka to sit with us and share such parts of the feast as did not break the Lenten fast. Newly made wooden spoons were given us, and a silver bowl of hot chicken broth was set in the center of the tray.

829 Sadiri Luka spoke little, but his remarks were sound and well considered. While our spoons

[1] [At house of Sadiri Luka, [190] wealthy man of upper Thethis--Analyst]

rhythmically dipped the delicious broth, he said that the whole question of good government in Albania depended upon the fixing of the frontiers, and that the League of Nations talks too much and does too little. He suggested, as explanation of this fact, that the League is made of human beings.

While we gorged upon pieces of miraculously tender roasted lamb, fished from a heaping platter, he said that any definite frontier, however unjust, would be better than the prolonged uncertainty which daily encouraged further Serbian invasions.

While we chose morsels of stewed chicken, he said that the greater danger was not from Serbia, which fought with artillery, but from Italy, now driven to intrigue. Italy, having been promised southern Albania and much of the eastern Adriatic coast in return for joining the Allies in the Great War, had now been cheated of payment, driven from Albania by the Albanians, and refused Fiume. However, Italy had authority from the League of Nations to occupy Albania again if the Albanians could not maintain a stable government. Italy would, therefore, do two things; first she would spend money and munitions in trying to stir rebellion within Albania and in encouraging the already savage discontent of Montenegro, Bosnia, and Croatia; then she would develop an aggressive foreign policy, drop all pretense of accord with France or England, and fight it out with Jugo-Slavia.

829 When this occurred, of course both Serbia and Italy would fall on Albania; any trouble in the Balkans was a signal for that.

[262] The chicken being taken away, we were given a bowl of little cakes, light as whipped cream, cooked in brown butter and served with honey.* Sadiri Luka said that the only hope of peace in the Balkans was a Balkan federation; nothing less, he said, would persuade the European Powers and Turkey to leave the Balkans alone. It was true that for fifteen centuries the Slavs had been attacking Albania and tearing territory from her; it was true that more than a million Albanians were suffering under Serbian and Greek rule to-day; it was true that Albanians had won the Greek war of independence, and the Young Turk revolution, and their own revolution, only to see their country mutilated by their neighbors and by European diplomacy. But if it were possible for free Albania to live, he believed she would be the leader in a movement for a Balkan federation, and he pointed out that, with frontiers free and military expenses pooled, all the Balkan peoples could develop lands and mines, water power and industries, and in time readjust their boundaries by purchase, which would be cheaper than war.

000 This solution was so logical that I suspected it to be in the realm of pure fantasy, for I have long observed that human affairs and logic have little in common. But we listened with great interest to these opinions of Sadiri Luka, which

*[At house of Sadiri Luka of Thethis --Analyst]

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

came strangely from an Albanian mountaineer 600 whose trousers proclaimed in black braiding his descent from a tribe older than history.

The feast continued for a long time; 1 there 262 were bowls of kos, which is sweet milk made solid in texture, but not sour, a joy on the tongue, and there were platters of fluffy rice with gravy and giblets, and many kinds of cheese, and little individual spits of broiled lamb, onions and potatoes, and a cream made of powdered rice, milk, and honey, and breast of chicken baked in sour cream, and crisp cakes of whipped white of egg browned in butter and smothered in beaten raw eggs and sugar—which is strange in words, but unexpectedly good to eat—and many other things which we tasted absent-mindedly. For the 000 setting sun had briefly conquered the clouds, the rain had stopped, and we thought of the trail to Thethis.

It was good to be out in the rain-sweet air, and the waterfalls were music in the evening quiet. Sunshine gleamed on the peaks of snow, blue and purple shadows filled the valleys, and bells of flocks came tinkling down the trails. When we had said farewell to Sadiri Luka and the chiefs of upper Thethis, by the arching glass-clear torrent to which they had accompanied us, we went on light-heartedly, humming to ourselves. And Perolli sang a song of the mountaineers which is more sound than words, being a song of evening with rippling water in it, and sleepy birds, and the bells of the flocks answer-

#[At house of Sadiri Luka [193] of Thethis -- Analyst]

000 ing one another across ravines and from far mountain slopes.

576 "Yes," he[1] said, "I am happy. I am happy, for Sadiri Luka[2] is a true Albanian, and when I go back to the plains I shall see that he is released from the price on his head which has been offered in Scutari."

"What!" we cried. Yes, he said, in a matter-of-fact tone, ten thousand kronen were officially offered for the head of Sadiri Luka.

"And he doesn't even carry a gun?"

"Why should he? He is among his own people. It is no shame to go unarmed among his own people. He would carry a rifle, certainly, if he had to go to Scutari."

"But you are from Scutari—we are all from Scutari—Cheremi, Rexh—and he asked us to his house?"

Perolli looked at us with scorn. We had been guests in the house of Sadiri Luka, he explained, with weary patience. If he had been twenty times a traitor to Albania, could a guest have killed him? And on the trail he had not carried a gun; no one could kill him, unarmed. He could go to Scutari in safety, if he went unarmed. But, of course, he would not do that, for that 627 would be shameful. For two years he had been living in upper Thethis, unable to go to Scutari without risking his life, though he was a merchant, and poor, and could have made a business for himself in Scutari. But it had all been a mistake, said Perolli, which he would clear up.

[1] [Perolli, secretary to Albanian [194] minister of Interior -- Analyst]

[2] [of Thethis -- Analyst]

Sadiri Luka had lost all he owned in Ipek when the Serbs came in. He escaped with only his rugs and the few pieces of silver we had seen. But his flocks, which were in summer pasture on the high mountains, had not been taken. Sadiri Luka had come back to his people in upper Thethis, and in the winter he had brought his flocks there. And in the spring he had sent them back to their summer pasture, now on the other side of the 1913 frontier. For this the price had been put on his head, as a traitor. How could his shepherds come and go with his flocks across the new frontier, guarded by Serbian troops, unless he were a traitor to Albania, unless he had secret dealings with the Serbs? For two years his sheep had got safely to their summer pastures and back again, while all the other flocks of Thethis had been taken by the Serbs or killed at home because there was no longer pasture for them.

The explanation, however, was quite simple. Sadiri Luka was a successful smuggler of his sheep. He explained to Perolli how he did it, for both of them knew by heart these mountains, which were strange to the Serbs. Once safely across the frontier, the flocks were comparatively safe, for the high plateaus where they grazed were uninhabited and hard to reach; so far, none but Albanian shepherds of Ipek had seen them there. Sheep, when they had no bells or lambs, were silent things, and the flocks were moved by night. Sadiri Luka said that, if he had reached

627 Thethis in time, he could have saved all the flocks by smuggling them through the ways he knew; already his shepherds were taking with them the few lambs born in Thethis in the last two years.

There was no question that Sadiri Luka was a true Albanian. For the Serbs had relied on their possession of the pasture lands to starve the tribes on the border into treason to Albania, so that the frontier could again be moved forward. Sadiri Luka, with his flocks, could have been a powerful weapon in Serbian hands, an object-lesson to the people of the advantages of friendship with Serbia which would have been well worth paying for. But he preferred to risk his sheep by smuggling them. The price on his head had been a mistake. The chiefs of Thethis had already said this to Perolli, and talk with Sadiri Luka had convinced him that it was true. Therefore he was very happy, and sang along the trail.

But joy is not a lasting thing on Albanian trails. We had gone but a little way, perhaps half an hour, when the skies opened again. The water fell with such force that we feared we would be washed from our foothold, and, gasping and drenched, clutching bowlders and deformed trees, we struggled into the shelter of a leaning cliff. We had hardly reached it when around its corner came two women under loads of wood. One was old and withered, with a strange, sharp expression; the other, as she put down her burden and straightened her back, showed us a most beautiful face. The pose of 627 her head was regal, her forehead and eyes and mouth struck the heart with their perfection of beauty and sorrow.

"You are a happy girl," she said to Frances, after our greetings. "I have never before seen anyone so happy. Why do you come to our sad country?"

Frances said we came because we loved the Albanian people and wanted to know them better.

"We would bless the trails that led you to our house," they said, and added, "but ours is a sad house."

"Why?" we asked, and the old woman answered, while the younger stared into the sheets of rain that veiled Thethis from us.

The son of the house, Kol Marku, husband of the younger woman, was an exile from his home. His wife had been brought to his house only a week before the night when he killed his cousin, Pjeter Gjon. He had not meant to do it. With a number of other men they had been sitting by his fire, their rifles on their knees, as usual. They were cold and tired and had been talking of crops, when suddenly Kol's rifle spoke and Pjeter fell back and died. Kol swore that he had not touched the trigger, but when the body was carried to the house of Pjeter, Pjeter's family said that Kol had killed him in order to become the head of the family and move with his bride into Pjeter's rich house. They claimed blood vengeance, by the Law of Lec.

PEAKS OF SHALA

627 It was a killing within the tribe, a matter for the chiefs to settle. They had conferred, and decided that Kol's family should pay to the family of Pjeter twelve thousand kronen, or that value in goods. The family of Pjeter had refused to accept this. Again the chiefs met. Twelve hundred kronen had been blood payment within a tribe before the Balkan war, but everything was higher now, and the chiefs offered fifteen hundred kronen. But the old mother of Pjeter was bitter, and the family said that no money would pay for the blood of her only son. They demanded blood for blood, life for life; only the death of Kol or one of his brothers would pay the debt. Kol fled from the mountains and his brothers walked in fear.

Without their men the family could not live. The land was poor, was too hard for the women to work. The irrigation ditches were down, and they could not lift the rocks to rebuild them. And the lives of the men, hunted without rest, became no longer good to them, so that they became morose and sat always by the fire talking of death. Then the women went to Padre Marjan, to ask of him the last ultimate effort.

The good padre granted their plea. Wearing his holy robes and attended by twenty-four chiefs walking in silence, he took the crucifix itself from the church, and went to the house of Pjeter in upper Thethis. For twelve hours he stood, holding the crucifix before the eyes of that family and telling them as God's messenger that they must forgive Kol. For twelve hours the twenty- 627 four chiefs stood beside him, waiting. But the old mother was bitter, and upheld the spirits of her nephews, so that they refused.

Never before in all the mountains had anyone refused forgiveness asked by the crucifix itself. It had been carried back to the church above twenty-five bowed heads, and the people of Thethis knelt before it in shame. And Kol could not come home, the men could not work in the fields. The family was always hungry, and the young wife had wept till her eyes were dry of tears.

"We could not again ask Padre Marjan to 600 take the crucifix," said the old woman, looking at us with eyes that begged that we would do so. But the young woman's eyes were somber and hopeless. The violence of the rain had lessened; below us we saw the green valley, the many little houses linked by tiny fields and a network of overflowing irrigation ditches, and the wounded church which had no steeple. But a column of smoke from the chimney showed that Padre Marjan was there. The women lifted their packs, bent forward under them, and slowly went out of sight down the trail.

Before we reached the level of the valley Padre Marjan had seen us, and came across the flat fields to escort us again to his door. He met us at the edge of a gorge in whose depths a waterfall turned the wheel of a mill beside a tiny house. Smoke seeped from the house roof to mix with the spray of the waterfall, and as Padre Marjan greeted us, up from that misty gorge leaped a figure that seemed risen from an incantation. She was less a child than a sprite, bare of arm and leg, clad in a scrap of sheepskin, with wildly tangled hair and bright, wild eyes. Even as she leaped she addressed us in passionate words.

Padre Marjan's response was clear without translation. He told her to be still and to go away; he spoke in distress and shame, but the sternness of his tone was hollow. The child stood her ground, she gulped and avoided the padre's eye, but determination shook all her little body, and she spoke again with vehemence. She was like one crying out against some monstrous injustice.

"What on earth does she say?"

"Well"—Perolli was reluctant, and also avoided the padre's eye—"did you give her brother a handkerchief? She says it is not just, because he also has new trousers, and she has neither handkerchief nor trousers. Absurd! What would she do with trousers?" And he also looked at her accusingly.

Feet planted firmly, the child faced the tall group of us, flung back her hair, and continued defiantly to speak: "It is not just. Is it my fault I am a girl? Is it my fault that I am too small to work in the mill? I go with the sheep, I carry the lamb, I climb the trees and cut leaves. I bring water from the spring." She beat her breast. "And my brother gets new trousers, and also a handkerchief! I, I have nothing! I have nothing to wear to the Easter mass, and my brother has new white trousers! And my brother has a handkerchief!" She stamped her bare foot. "I say to the world that it is not just. I shall cry to the Five Tribes that it is not just!"

"My word, but she's magnificent!" said Frances.

"Tell her quickly, Rexh—she shall have a handkerchief—she shall have two handkerchiefs," said Alex.

"Glory to your lips," said the child, for an instant unbroken by the happiness. Then she swung her tangled hair across her face and fled, weeping.

It was curiosity as much as the renewed violence of rain which made us follow her down the trail and go into the little house. Two women welcomed us on the doorstep and led us into darkness lightened by a handful of fire. They were mother and grandmother, both haggard and worn by work. They had no coffee and no sugar, but they welcomed us to their house by offering each in turn a cup of hot water, with all the ceremonies of coffee drinking. They thanked us beautifully for the handkerchief we had given their boy—the little girl had not yet returned to the house—and we thanked them for the three eggs. He was a good boy, they said, fourteen years old, and he had built the mill and worked in it. A clever, good boy. The new trousers lay on the earthen floor, carefully wrapped in a cloth; while she talked, the mother unwrapped them and worked on the black Shala pattern. The boy's father had been killed in the Serbian retreat of 1914, but the boy had been too young to fight. And the little girl was born on the mountains while their village was burning. But the boy—always the talk returned to the boy, and it was easy to see why he had the new Easter trousers.

"Perhaps it is unjust to the girl, but it is because they are so poor," Padre Marjan said, as we went home through the gathering darkness. "And I am sure she did not mean to beg. But you see they have so little, and they do give all they have to the boy. After all, he is the head of the family, and he is a good boy; he works their land and he works in the mill; he keeps them all alive."

"And out of such poverty they sent us three eggs," said Alex.

Padre Marjan asked what she had said, and when he was told he answered, "My people are poor and ignorant, but they know what is due a guest."

CHAPTER XI

MASS IN THE CHURCH OF THETHIS—A MOUNTAIN CHIEF SEEKS A WIFE—DOWN THE VALLEY OF THE LUMI SHALA, WHILE THE DRANGOJT FIGHT THE DRAGON—HOW REXH CAME TO SCUTARI.

THE next morning was Sunday, and we 796 were awakened by the church bell. It hung in a belfry over the padre's kitchen, and the padre pulled the rope himself. Then tucking his brown robe about his bare ankles, he descended the broken, draughty stairs to the church, and we followed him through blasts of cold rain that the wind drove through holes that had been made in the walls by the invading Serbs.

The church itself was bleak and cold; a bare [346] room, whitewashed, with the stations of the Cross represented by crudely colored lithographs stained by the damp. A railing separated the body of the church from the altar, where a very brightly colored picture of the Virgin hung, surrounded by wreaths of paper flowers, above a rough table with a bit of brocade spread carefully upon it. We girls were given a bench inside the railing, and sat there in a row, in our many-times-water-soaked sweaters and trousers. Outside the railing all the women and

796 children and half the men of the village knelt on the cold floor, and their rain-drenched garments, threadbare and patched, made pools of water about their knees. The rain was still pouring down, as undiminished as a river, and the sound of it and of the waterfalls filled the chill place.

Padre Marjan began the mass, his high Albanian voice chanting the Latin, and the congregation made the responses in the same tongue. A ragged, barefooted man came to swing the censer for the padre, and Perolli, in his neat English tweeds, revolver and knife swinging at the belt, also assisted, going behind the altar with the padre to help him put a brocaded robe over the brown one, and reverently handing the cup and the wine. Rexh, in his red Mohammedan fez, watched it all with serious eyes, his head around the edge of the doorway.

851 After mass the padre dashed upstairs to look at our cooking dinner, and hastened down again for a christening.[1] I am not familiar with Catholic ceremonial, but nothing could have been more touching than Padre Marjan, thin, worn by fasting and work, barefooted, the edge of his brown robe showing below the front hem of a white cotton garment, bringing into the arms of the Church the tiny, wrinkled infant strapped in its painted cradle. The woman who held it looked at him with a sort of apprehensive anxiety; the crowd pressed informally around them. Every time the padre turned to fetch the little glass bottle of oil, or the tin can of holy

[1] [In church of Upper Thethis--[204] Analyst]

water, or the square of crocheted cotton lace that he laid over the cradle, the packed bodies gave way for him, and one child or another picked up the end of his trailing robe to keep it from beneath muddy, bare feet.

At the end, "Is it a boy or a girl?" he asked.

"A girl," the woman whispered. And the padre ended his solemn words with the name, "Regina."

The woman sighed and her tenseness relaxed. It must have been a great moment for the mother, I thought; some one said that she had carried the cradle forty miles over the mountains for this christening. We did want to give the baby something; for the hundredth time we regretted not having brought presents, and a hurried ransacking of all our possessions produced only a little colored sport handkerchief. But when we gave it to the baby it was as though we had presented a golden bowl; the excitement, the passing from hand to hand, the reverent marveling over such weaving, such color!

We found Perolli upstairs in the kitchen, grinning to himself, and when we asked him why, he said the christening was a joke on the padre. The woman was not the child's mother; the real mother, married by Albanian custom, had not yet got around to having the church ceremony, and the priest in the village forty miles away had refused to christen the child until the parents were married by the Church. But the devout neighbor, knowing that the infant was in danger

851 of hell fire, had brought it over the mountains and had it christened as her own, and Padre Marjan, all unsuspecting, had performed the ceremony.

Not half an hour later an almost naked man, streaming with rain as though he had swum the forty miles, appeared, breathless, with a water-soaked note from the other priest, and Padre Marjan read it aghast. “Merely parochial business,” he said, tucking it in his belt and bending over the bubbling pots in the fireplace to taste and season. But his brown face remained wrinkled with worry.

581 A matter far more serious distracted attention from this complication in Church affairs, for Perolli,[1] taking me aside, said to me:[2] “You say you love the Albanians and the Albanian mountains. Do you want to stay here?”

“I’d love to stay here for years,” I said. “It’s the most beautiful country I’ve ever seen, and the most interesting people. But I can’t, of course. Why?”

“Because you can, if you really do want to,” said he. “I have a proposal of marriage for you.”

“What!” said I. “You’re joking!”

“Not at all,” said Perolli, indignantly. “Do you think marriage is a thing to joke about?”

“But I never know what you mean,” I complained. “And why should anyone want to marry me, here?”

“You needn’t take it as a compliment to your

[1] [Sec. to the Minister of the Interior -- Analyst]

[2] [Author -- Analyst]

personal charm, if that's what you mean," said Perolli, coldly. "It's really your short hair. But I can get twenty thousand kronen for you, if you want to marry and stay here." 581

"Twenty thousand kronen!" said I. "Two thousand dollars? For me? Here? But for Heaven's sake, why? You don't mean anyone thinks me beautiful, among all these Albanian women?" said I, indignantly.

"Of course not," said Perolli.

"And I can't even talk their language. What do you mean, twenty thousand kronen? And what has short hair to do with it? Don't be so annoying, Perolli. What *do* you mean?"

"Well," said Perolli, "Lulash† would like to have an American wife. I don't mean he put it to me so crudely as that. He didn't actually put it to me at all, in fact. But I know that he will [583] give twenty thousand kronen for you, and you can stay here and make over the whole life of Shala, if you like."

"But why me? Why not Frances, or Alex?"

"Because you are all a long way past marrying 302 age, in Albania, and their hair is long, so natur- 582 ally these people think they are already married. But your hair is short, so they think you are a sworn virgin. In these mountains, when a girl is old enough to marry and absolutely refuses to marry the man to whom she has been promised, she may escape the marriage by swearing before the chiefs of the two tribes an oath of life-long virginity, and she cuts her hair and takes a man's

†[Tribal chief in Thethi -- Analyst]

582 place in the tribe. Naturally, when they see
302 you, at your age, with short hair, they think
that is what you did. If you were an Albanian no one would dream of marrying you, for the man to whom your parents gave you would have to kill your husband to clear his honor, and all the chiefs before whom you had sworn would be bound in honor to see that your husband was killed. But America is a long way off; that man and the chiefs would hardly come so far after you, especially as your customs are so different.
581 Besides, I think Lulash would take the chance,
562 anyhow. He really very much wants a woman
to help him with the people, and he will not marry a mountain woman."

"You mean he would listen to my ideas and take my advice—you mean he wants a wife who will be his equal, a sort of partner?"

"Of course. What else is a wife? He would like nothing better than to have you give him American ideas."

"But I thought a woman had no rights at all, here."

"How absurd! She has all the rights that a man has."

"But women aren't in the tribal councils?"

"They are when it's a council of the whole tribe. They aren't chiefs, no. But chiefs always talk things over with their wives."

583 "But women are bought and sold. You just
said so. Didn't you say you were offered twenty thousand kronen for me?"

"It's an unusual situation. Here you are, 583
without a family; I'm the only man in the party; naturally he thinks of me as in the position of a brother or a father. The man's family always pays money to the girl's family before a marriage, but the girl isn't sold; she's been betrothed in her childhood, for any number of reasons. The money the man pays is spent for the girl's clothes and household things."

"Then you'd be supposed to give me the twenty thousand kronen? And then it would be his again, after all."

"Of course not. It's yours, isn't it? No one 562
has any right to a woman's personal belongings, except her."

"You mean I could do anything I liked with it? I wouldn't have to have his consent?"

"Of course you could do anything you liked with it," Perolli said, wearily. "This isn't Europe."

"Obviously," said I. "Nor America."

"Well, what do you say? Do you want to 000
do it?"

Men ask women to marry them for many reasons and from many motives, even though they are all lumped under the word "love." Sometimes the asking is an honor that should make any woman, either happily or regretfully, proud. And sometimes it isn't. For myself, I shall always remember as one of my finest experiences this offer of a scalplocked Shala chief to pay twenty thousand kronen for me. There was

PEAKS OF SHALA

000 no eager clutching in it, no selfish, grasping, personal asking for personal happiness; he could have had no idea whether or not this strange woman would bring happiness into his house; his motives in asking her to marry him had their roots quite outside himself. He believed that she would help him in his work for the tribe.

And I thought that a woman might have a much worse life than in this remote, stranded fragment of primitive times still left among the Albanian mountains, where respect for women is not taught like courteous manners, but is as natural as breathing, so natural that it is never discussed nor even thought about, and where marriage is not centered in small egotisms, but in the larger idea of the family and the future.

But I must admit that to live that life requires other training than any daughter of the twentieth century has received, for one's ideas have little to do with one's actions; my mind might admire this alien concept of life, but I fear that nothing will ever lead a Western woman to marry for the good of anyone but herself.

"Why, Perolli," I said, "of course I can't marry a Shala chief!"

627 We came back to the fireplace where Padre Marjan was stirring the tantalizing contents of the cooking pots, and were clutched by a radiant Frances. She had ventured to speak to Padre Marjan about the family of Kol Marku.[1] And this was the news he had told her. The bitter old mother of Pjeter was relenting. Because the

[1] [See cat. 627, pp. 196-209 210] for case of Kol Marku --Analyst]

holy Easter-time was near—so Padre Marjan 627 said, but we guessed that Padre Marjan himself had caused her change of heart—the family of Pjeter had told him the day before in upper Thethis that Kol Marku might come home, and the men of his family work in peace, for two weeks.

This was the law of the blood-feud truce; that the injured party might grant, when it desired to do so, on holy days or at a time of common danger from without, a reprieve of a stated length of time. During that time the families or tribes involved would meet and greet each other courteously, although on the day that the truce ended the law of the blood debt applied again, and they must kill each other at sight. The family of Pjeter had granted two weeks—fourteen days of burden lifted from the spirit of the family of Kol Marku. A great deal could be done in fourteen days, Padre Marjan said—fields cleared, ditches repaired, seed sown, family councils held. And he was hopeful that this was the beginning of complete forgiveness; perhaps in another year Kol Marku might come home to stay with his family. The news was being telephoned to the tribe in which he had taken refuge—a tribe in the valley of the Kiri, near Scutari—and in two days at most he would be in Thethis. Already the men of his family were working; we ∞∞ could see them from the windows of Padre Marjan's dining room, working in the rain with iron bar and hammer, attacking a gigantic bowlder which lay in the middle of their poor little field. Laboriously they chipped at it, cutting it into pieces small enough to roll away, and they worked with trembling haste, for it seemed a task too long to be done in two weeks. We wished that we might be there when Kol Marku came home.

And the next morning, in the rain that still continued to flood down from apparently inexhaustible skies, we all stood on the edge of the cliff, half a mile down the trail, and said farewell to the village of Thethis. Everyone had come so far on the trail with us; Padre Marjan thanked us in the name of the village; Lulash spoke, his hand on his heart; Frances and Alex and I addressed them with as many happy phrases of thanks as we could devise. All the guns were fired and fired again; all along the cliff tops the boys were giving a last display of the astounding feats that human muscles can do.

"Go on a smooth trail!" they all called after us as we went over the rustic bridge that crosses the green stream dotted with white bowlders and black bowlders and rose-colored bowlders and the one huge bowlder of jade, and, looking back from far down the trail, we saw the people of Thethis still standing there, a black and white and gorgeously colored mass against the gray rocks.

Our way led down the Lumi Shala. Going northeastward from Scutari, we had reached that river's headwaters at Thethis, and now, crossing it, we came southeastward, high on the shoulders of the mountains that wall its narrow valley. Higher still, seen at intervals through breaks in the lower mountains, a wall of pure white snow rose into the sky; the wall of the second great mountain range, which we were to cross to reach still more hidden fastnesses and wilder tribes.

We went across the lands of the Shala tribe, but there were no villages on the way and no scattered houses; it was fifteen miles to our next stopping place, the village of Shala. "An hour and a half," said Cheremi, gayly; he had learned to speak short English sentences in the few days he had been with us, but he could not learn that fifteen miles of exhausting mountain climbing meant more than ninety pleasant minutes to anybody.

Padre Marjan has lent us his little horse, a beautiful bay, hardly larger than a Shetland, but perfectly built, with a saddle of red leather held on by finely woven woolen straps. He went across slides of slippery shale, climbed giant bowlders, walked on a log that crossed a two-hundred-foot gorge, and made his way straight up the courses of waterfalls as easily and cheerfully as a pet dog. But after our days of walking our muscles did not like even the very slight idleness of such riding, and our own feet carried us most of the way.

An indescribably wild, beautiful way it was, with hundred-mile vistas opening before us, changing, disappearing again, as we rounded ooo cliffs or passed the ends of smaller mountain ranges that ran down to the opposite banks of the Lumi Shala. There were villages over there; we saw them built against the mountains like clumps of gray swallows' nest—the villages of [376] Shoshi, with whom Shala was in blood. At the foot of the waterfall streams that dashed down their cliffs we saw now and then a little mill, flooded with water, its roof of slate hardly showing above the flood, where in drier season Shoshi ground its grain or put the loosely woven white woolen cloth to be soaked in the running water and pounded by paddle wheels until it shrank into the feltlike fabric that makes their garments.

[233] 246 Here and there a red-brown or gray-white moving patch at the foot of a clump of mangled trees announced that a little shepherd was there, clinging to a tall stump and cutting twigs to throw down to the goats and sheep; we were too far away to see him. And there were other clumps of trees green with uncut leaves; always near these we saw, bronze brown among the gray rocks, structures taller than a man and shaped like a beehive. These were trees that the axes spare until the leaves are fully grown and filled with sap. Then the branches are cut and piled in a circle, the cut ends outward and the leaves to the center, layer upon layer, until the beehive shape is completed, when they are weighted down with rocks. The leaves dry, remaining green and nutritious, and slowly through the winter the curious silos are demolished armful

by armful and carried into the houses to be fed 246
to the sheep and goats.

The sky was still a leaden gray, with darker 000
clouds moving sluggishly among the mountains, and the air still seemed more than half full of falling water. The soaked rawhide opangi were like soft rags on my feet; at every step my woolen stockings emptied and filled with water like sponges, and all our fingers were shrunk in ridges from the long wetting. But we were gay, 522
we sang along the way, the weak little songs that so amused the steel-lunged mountaineers, and when a low growl of thunder and a flicker of fire among the clouds announced a stronger onslaught of the rain, Perolli waved his hand toward the mountain tops and joyously shouted something—we thought, to the effect that we were not flowers.

"*Dranit?*" said I. "Great Scott! do you need announce that we aren't flowers? Shout that we are not drowned puppies, if you want to startle onlookers."

"Not *dranit—drangojt,*" Perolli corrected. "I said to the dragon he may growl as he likes; we're not drangojt."

"No," I said. "No, we aren't. But what aren't we?"

"Drangojt," replied Perolli, and broke into careless song. There were times when I could have boxed that young man's ears, for nothing is more irritating than a sense of humor which is not yours. And the Albanians have a sense

522 of humor which is never idle, and seldom comprehensible to the foreigner.

776 "Drangojt means the people with wings, Mrs. Lane," said Rexh, and thought that all was clear. "You know, the people born with little wings under their arms," he elaborated, when I regarded him blankly. "The people—I don't know how other to say it, Mrs. Lane. Wings, you know—what the birds fly with—wings. Under their arms. Don't you have people born with wings in your country?"

I said that if we had I knew nothing of it, and Rexh's forehead wrinkled with perplexity. "But perhaps—— Of course you are not a drangue, you would not know the American drangojt," he concluded, his face clearing. "You can usually tell them, though, by their running to their houses whenever it rains. First, you hear the dragon on the mountains; then, you see all the drangojt running to houses. That is the way you tell them; except, if you are their mother, then you see the wings when they are born. But if you are not their mother, you cannot see the wings, and you only know they are drangojt when they run to their houses in the rain."

"Are they afraid they'll get their wings wet?" said I, with great interest.

"Oh no! They are not afraid of anything. When the weather is thundering, that is the dragon fighting with the drangojt. So when they hear the dragon, all the drangojt go quickly to their houses to be ready if they are called to fly and fight the dragon. Even the babies fly 776 home with their cradles. There is no drangue so young that it could not anyway scratch the dragon."

That was the charm and delight of those days and nights, all too few, which I spent in the Albanian mountains. Around every turn in the trail the unexpected awaited us.

We gazed with new interest upon the gray clouds that struggled among the mountain tops. The dragon and the drangojt were fighting up there, then? Yes, indeed, said Rexh. When the drangojt had defeated the dragon, then he would go away and we would see the sun again. All the world, he said, would be taken by the dragon, and we would never see the sun again, if it were not for the brave drangojt. Once the dragon had almost taken the world—that was when the waters fell and the seas were born—and only the drangojt of Dukaghini had saved it then. That was long ago. "Long, long years of years ago," said Rexh. "I guess, even before these tribes of people and drangojt were ever called Dukaghini." At that time, the dragon had lost his three heads, and that was why there never since had been such a battle in the skies.

"How do you know all this, Rexh?" we asked, respectfully.

"It was told in the songs," said he.

"And do you know those songs?" 000

No, he said regretfully. He had heard some of them when he was very little—when he lived

000 with his people in the mountains. But when the Montenegrins came and killed all his family that had not died in the fighting, and burned his village, then he had had to go all the way to Scutari, hiding from the Montenegrins. "You know, they came all the way to Scutari, too, Mrs. Lane. And I had to hide from them, because I was so little. I took a gun from a dead man, and it was a good gun, too, but it was so heavy I could not carry it, so I could not fight. I was only six years old. So I had to hide, and when I came to Scutari I found the first of my children, and then little by little I found the others, and so I was very busy all these years. And learning English and Arabic, and working with Miss Hardy, and all, I have forgotten to sing. I'm sorry I do not remember the songs.

"How did I find my children? They were just there, in the streets, Mrs. Lane, and I saw them. I took the first one because he was littler than me—than I—and he had cut his foot on a rock, and I knew by his clothes he was of my tribe. And I had found a dry place to sleep, so I took him there. And then the others just came, little by little. Some when the Serbians came through in 1914, and some when the Austrians came, and Glosh came from Gruda last fall when the Montenegrins were killing up there. I hope they are all well and clean," he added, anxiously. "I told them to wash themselves and their clothes and their blankets every week while I was gone. I made them give a *besa* to do it, and there is anyway plenty of water in the river and probably it is not raining in Scutari, so it will be all right. But if it is raining, then they will have to wash their clothes because they gave a *besa*, and it perhaps can be that they will take cold."

The rain had become so breath-taking that we said no more, rapidly following the trail which ran easily through a small deformed wood, among the ten-foot cones of dried branches which were last fall's store of winter fodder. The path came soon to the edge of a cliff, dipped over it, and ran along the wall of rock, high above the Lumi Shala. Here, sheltered in a smoke-blackened shallow cave, we found Cheremi and four strange men sitting by a tiny fire and smoking cigarettes Bundles of dried boughs which two of them had been carrying were stacked behind them, and Padre Marjan's little horse was munching a handful of leaves and gazing out at the rain.

CHAPTER XII

THE SONG OF THE LAST GREAT WAR WITH THE DRAGON — AN UNEXPECTED BANDIT — HOW AHMET, CHIEF OF THE MATI, WENT BY NIGHT TO VALONA—THE RAISING OF SCANDERBEG'S FLAG—AN ALBANIAN LOVE SONG.

THEY made places for us, laid another handful of dry twigs on the fire, and rolled fresh cigarettes. The Lumi Shala was rising higher than they had ever known it to do, they said, and the Drin was overflowing in the Merdite country. And learning that we were from Scutari, they asked us what we knew of the Tirana government, of which they had heard. Was it true that the Land of the Eagle was free?

Leaving discussion of politics to Perolli, we sat cross-legged, looking into the straight lines of rain that covered the mouth of the cave like a curtain. Faintly through them we could see a blueness of mountains and a greenness of fields beyond the narrow rust-red ledge of the trail. Time passed, with a murmur of talk and a crunching of leaves, until Rexh touched my elbow.

"Here is a man, Mrs. Lane, who knows the end of one of those songs. He does not know it all, but he can sing about the eating, after the

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

war was ended. He will sing it for you, if you 000
want him to."

He was a grimy man, barefooted, ragged, and 533
incredibly whiskered. But he carried besides his [534]
rifle on his back an old beautifully made musical instrument somewhat resembling a mandolin, with a long neck ending in a carved ram's head. It was strung with fine wire, and he handled it proudly; the wire, he said, had come from Scutari. In his father's day it had been strung with horsehair and played with a bow, but at the time of his own marriage he had sent to Scutari for the wire, and he now played it with a finger nail. Fresh cigarettes were rolled and adjusted in holders, knees were crossed comfortably, and the song began.

It was only a fragment—the last song of all 533
the songs about that great war of the dragon and 539
the drangojt above the Dukaghini mountains. The strangely pitched twang of the wire accompanied the words, chanted in a wild rhythm to the rain-filled valley of the Lumi Shala:

"The ora of Shala came from the deathless forest,
From the wood that is always green beyond the Mali Nicaj.
The ora of Shala saw the war in the air above the forest,
She saw the war in the air above the crashing peaks,
She saw the blood of the dragon spilled on the rocks.
Ho lo! Ho la! The head of the dragon falls!
Ho lo! Ho la! Two heads of the dragon are dead!
Ho lo! Ho la! Three heads of the dragon fall on the rocks!
The men of the earth are saved!
The ora of Shala screamed the word that the earth was
saved.

PEAKS OF SHALA

533 Three times the ora of Shala screamed,
539 And her scream was heard on the Mali Nicaj,
Her voice was heard on the Chafa Morines,
And the Lumi Shala ran through the valley of Shala.
Three times the ora of Shala called,
And the ora of all the mountains came to her call,
They came like sparks from a fire to the ora of Shala.
'Oh, my sisters, this is the word from the battle.
The dragon is dead and the world is saved!
The brave drangojt have saved the world.
The mountains stand without moving forevermore,
And the waters go back to their places,
For the brave drangojt have saved the world.
We will make a feasting for the saviors of the world.
My sister, go to the field for grain,
Cut it and thresh it and grind it,
Make bread and bake it well.
My sister, go to the mountains among the flocks,
Find a sheep with a lamb beside her,
Ask the sheep to give you her milk
For we make a feast for the brave drangojt.
My sister, go to the tree that is hollow
To the tree where the honey is made,
And ask the bees for their yellow honey.
My sister, here is a knife that is sharp;
Strike true, strike deep, strike quickly,
And bake the meat in a heated pit.'
The first ora came with bread on her head,
The second ora came with a sack of milk,
A milk sack made from the skin of trees.
The third ora came with her hands full of honey.
The fourth ora came with two roasted animals,
Large roasted animals, hot and brown.
Now we can go to our brave drangojt.
The hair of the ora was unbound,
And their heads were crowned with flowers,
And the beauty of the world was their garment.

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

PEAKS OF SHALA

The ora of Shala came first to the Mali Riges, 533
The ora of Shala came to the camp of the drangojt. 539
'I hope we find you well, heroes of the earth,
Long may you live, the courage of the world.'
Then rose and spoke Lleshi of Lleshi,
Chief of the tribe of the Merdite drangojt.
'Welcome to you from wherever you come.
Where have you been hiding your beauty?'
'I am the sister of the ora of the Merdite,
She who is guarding the Mali Mundelles.
I am the ora of Shala.
Long live the heroes who have killed the dragon,
Long live the warriors who have saved the world.'
Then on the grass they sat for the feasting.
All the ora turned back their sleeves,
Making ready to serve the heroes.
The first ora broke the round loaf of bread,
The second ora brought the hot roasted meat,
The third ora brought the bowl of yellow honey,
The fourth ora poured the milk from the sack.
All the ora brought good water from the spring,
And the drangojt drank from the cup of their hands.
When the feasting was ended they left that place,
They washed their hands in flowing water,
They lay by a fire on a carpet of leaves,
And they spoke of many things pleasant to hear.
They spoke till the star of the dawn came out
Above the peaks of the Mali Mundelles.
The star of the daylight came out,
For the power of the dragon was broken.
This was the feast of the Merdite drangojt
After the last great war with the dragon."

The player ran his finger down the wire in a final weird whine, and the instrument lay silent on his knees. "'That is all I know of that one," he said. "But if the American *zonyas* would like ooo to hear other songs, I can sing them, for I am a bandit."

I cannot describe the shock we felt at those simple words. "*Jam comitadj.*" Yes, he had said them. Or had he?

"*Comitadj?*" said I, noticing a strange stiffness in my lower jaw. "*Nuk comitadj?*"

"*Po,*" said he, quite calmly. And the modesty which reveals too great pride touched his voice as he added, "I have been a bandit for many years."

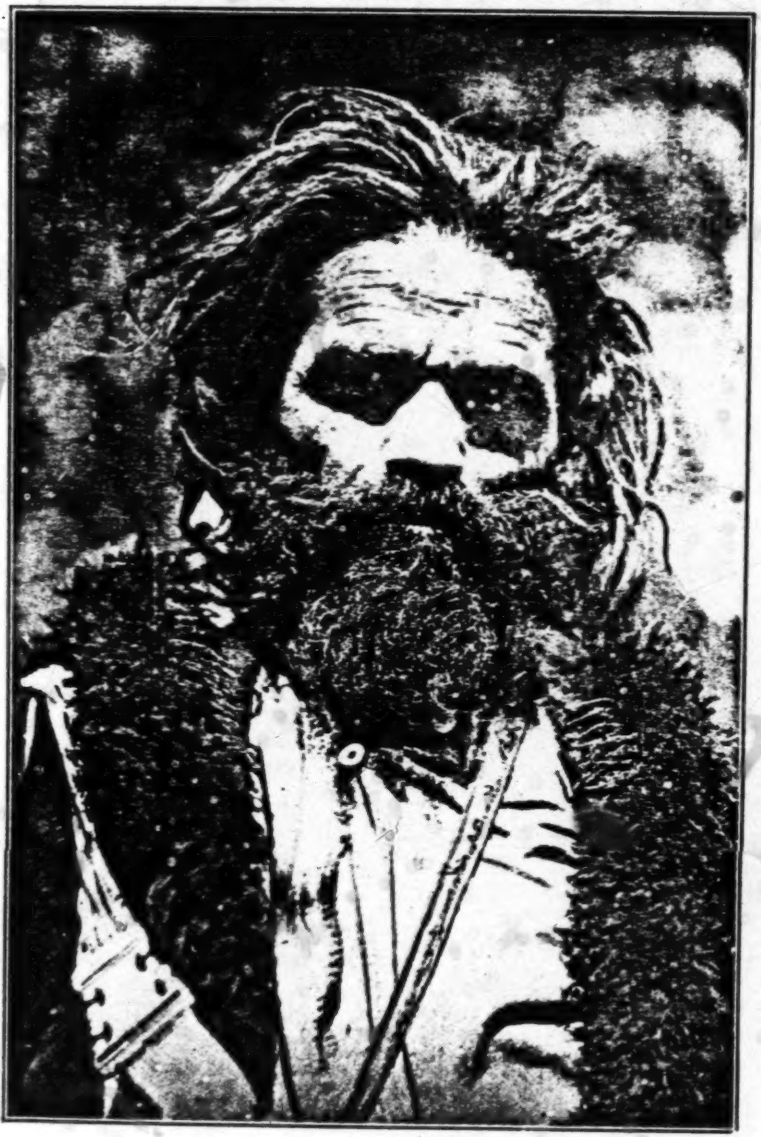
Automatically my eyes sought Frances's. Hers were widely open, and expressed only a shock as great as mine. We both turned a fascinated gaze upon the bandit, who had laid aside his musical instrument and rested a fond hand on his rifle. "For many years," he repeated.

"Do you like it?" said I, weakly. "Do you like—banditing?"

I had read of bandits in the Balkans, and I had heard of them, and I had even thought how self-possessed and cool I would be if I encountered one of them. "Certainly," I would say, with dignity. "Take my money if you like; it is very little; you are welcome. But there will be no use whatever in your holding me for ransom, because——" I suppose everyone falls into these absurdities of imagined and impossible conversations. The lure of them is their offer of escape from reality. Certainly I had never believed that a real, living bandit would step out of that fantastic realm and be a solid figure in

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

579



THE BANDIT WHOM WE MET IN THE CAVE ABOVE THE LUMI SHALA AND WHO SANG US THE SONG OF DURGAT PASHA

A letter just received from Albania brings the news that he has cut his beard, hung his rifle on the wall (when disarming the mountaineers the Albanian government made an exception in his case), and is now running, with considerable success, a sawmill in the Mati.

[2240]

PEAKS OF SHALA

ooo the daylight. I, *I* in a bandit's cave! Such things didn't *happen;* they were only in books. So I said, meekly, timidly, quite inadequately, "Do you like—banditing?"

579 Yes, he said, he liked it very much. He became even poetic about it. I admit I took no notes of what he said. But I recall Rexh's voice repeating lyrical words about life on the mountains, camp fires and stars, freedom and fighting—the only life for a man, he declared. Once he had stopped being a bandit and gone back to the life of houses, but he was glad when the time came to be a bandit again.

I had not thought that being a bandit was a seasonal occupation, and I begged an explanation of these mysterious words. It developed that they referred to wars unknown and unrecorded save in the songs of the mountaineers, and we became so involved in references cryptic to me, but clear to the listening Albanians, that at last I was obliged to beg him to begin at the beginning and tell the straight story of his life. This he did, with the modest reluctance of a hero surrounded by admirers.

"I was not a rich man," he began, "but as our saying is, 'The smallest hair has its own shadow.' There were sheep in my house, and it was a house of two rooms, and the fields repaid our labor.. The tobacco box in my sash was never empty, and there was bread in the baking pan. There was a son in the cradle and another by the fire, and life was as smooth as the Lumi

7 [Albanian bandit [225] encountered on trail above Lumi Shala -- Analyst]

PEAKS OF SHALA

579 Shala in summer, until the coming of Durgat Pasha.

"After that came the treason of Essad Pasha, and, having then neither house, nor sheep, nor sons, nor tobacco, but only my rifle——"

We must interrupt, to bring him back to
Durgat Pasha, and he was astonished that more
than that name was needed to make us under-
stand. Had we never heard the songs of Durgat
533 Pasha? Durgat Pasha, who in 1912 came from
539 the Sultan of Turkey to subdue the Sons of the
Eagle? Durgat Pasha, who burned and killed,
from the Mali Malines to the Malit Shkodra?
He bent over the instrument on his knees,
twanged three wild notes from it, and sang:

"Seven Powers had called a council,
Seven Powers met and said,
'Shqiperia is no more in our hands,
All Shqiperia is not in our hands.'
Then rose Durgat Pasha and took his gun.
'Leave this to me for three years.
O Sultan, I go for three years.
When I return the Shqiptars are yours.'
Durgat Pasha came past the white lake,
Durgat Pasha to the Mali Malines,
Durgat Pasha to the Mali Shoshit,
Durgat Pasha and five thousand soldiers.
He sends word to Hasjakupit,
'You shall send your rifle to me.
'Thirty Turkish pounds have I paid for my rifle,
Thirty pounds for my own rifle,
But I leave houses and lands and go with my rifle.
Thirty houses I leave behind me.'
These were the words of Hasjakupit.

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

PEAKS OF SHALA

'Thirty houses I leave behind me, 533
And into Montenegro I go. 539
I go to King Nichola of Montenegro;
He will give me meat and bread.'
Durgat Pasha on the top of the mountain,
Durgat Pasha with Shala around him,
Durgat Pasha had no bread or water,
Durgat Pasha's rifles had nothing to eat.
And the fighting men of Shala were all around him,
The fighting of Shala was terrible.
Durgat Pasha went out of his way to Puka.
Puka and Iballa greeted him.
When he came to Bashchellek
All of Scutari came to greet him.
The people of Scutari were frightened.
Durgat Pasha was going to die,
And Scutari rubbed his face with a sack,
Scutari gave him food and drink.
Then rose Salo Kali of Scutari.
'My rifles I cannot give,
I have made *besa* with one hundred men;
Our rifles are not for Durgat Pasha.'
'Leave the *besa*, Salo Kali,
Take your hammer and shoe the horses.
That is your business, Salo Kali.
What have you to do with rifles?'
'I have made *besa* with one hundred men;
Our rifles are not for Durgat Pasha.'
Durgat Pasha rubbed his forehead.
'I have never seen this kind of people,
I never saw a nation like Shala or Shoshi.
What can be done with the Shqiptars?'
These were the words of Durgat Pasha.

"That is the song of Durgat Pasha," said the 725 bandit. "When I came home from the fighting, the men of Durgat Pasha had burned my house, 725 and my wife and my sons were dead. It was then I gave *besa* to myself never to hang my rifle on the wall and never to cut my beard until all Albania was free. And I went to fight the Serbs at Chafa Bullit. That was good fighting. All day we fought, and at night we lay by the camp fires and the women gave us bread and meat. All day long, while we were fighting, the women were on the trails bringing us bread and meat. Then we were tired and slept, and the air was good, not like the air in houses. And in the morning, when the stars were pale, we raised the war cry and killed more Serbs. It was a good life.

"It was at this time that the chiefs of Kossova came secretly by night through the Serbian lines to the house of Ahmet Bey Mati, and I was called by Ahmet to take them to Valona. He said that a word would be spoken in Valona to make Albania free. I said to Ahmet: 'The Montenegrins hold Scutari and the seacoast even to San Giovanni, the European Powers are in Durazzo, the Serbs have Kossova and the Dibra, the Greeks are in the south. What is talk of freedom? This is not a time to talk; it is a time to fight.' Ahmet said, 'Before the war cry, the council of chiefs.' Ahmet is chief of the Mati, head of the family that has ruled the Mati since the days of Scanderbeg. He was a boy of sixteen, newly come from the court of Sultan Abdul Hamid; he did not wear the clothes of the Malisori, and the chiefs of the Mati laced his opangi before every battle, because he did 725 not know how to lace opangi. Yet it must be said that it was his coming that saved the Mati from the Serbs. He came quickly, killing seven horses between Monastir and Borelli, and he told the chiefs what to do, and they saved the Mati. It was hot fighting. For five months he had been fighting and sleeping on the rocks. His chiefs loved him.

"I said, 'I am killing Serbs, and have no wish to go to Valona.' Ahmet said: 'When my father died, my older brother sent me from my country to the Turks. I do not know the trails. The chiefs of Kossova are my guests, and they do not know the trails. We must go to Valona through Elbassan, where the Serbs are. There is a meeting of all the chiefs of Albania in Valona. If we are killed by the Serbs, there will be no chiefs of the Malisori at that meeting. There will be only Toshks—men of the plains.' I said: 'To-night the moon will be dark. We must start as soon as we can see the small stars.'

"In three nights we were at the house of Asif Pasha in Elbassan. No, nothing disturbed us on the way, except that we were obliged to kill with our hands the dogs that sometimes came upon us from the villages. The Serbs were everywhere, and we could not use our guns. When we came to the house of Asif Pasha, the chiefs of Kossova with Ahmet slept in one room, and I sat with Asif Pasha by the fire in another room. Elbassan was held by many hundred Serbian soldiers. At midnight five officers with thirty soldiers came to the door. They came in, and would not take coffee. They stood, and said: 'Who are the twelve men who sleep to-night in this house? Do not lie, for we know that they are here.'

"Asif Pasha said, 'This is one of them.' I said, 'I will tell you who they are, but I beg you not to let them know that I have told. I am only a servant, and they are great chiefs. They are byraktors of five villages of the Mati, three villages of the Merdite, and three villages of Shala and Shoshi. They have come to Elbassan to talk with the Serbs. They have come secretly, hiding from the other chiefs. I do not know why. I beg you not to tell them that I have told, for they are tired and dirty, and they are sleeping while the women clean their clothes so that they will be clean to-morrow when they go to speak to your chiefs.'

"The officers sat down then, and one of them wrote. He wrote the names of the chiefs as I gave them to him, and he wrote what I said, that the Malisori were tired of fighting, and had little ammunition, and did not like their chiefs that made them fight. While he wrote, Asif Pasha gave them rakejia, and more and more rakejia, but no coffee. When the Serbs had become foolish I went to the other room where the chiefs were listening with their rifles in their hands, and I took them all by a way I knew, out of Elbassan.

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

"So we came to Valona, to the house of Ismail Kemal Bey Vlora, the same who had been Grand Vizier of Abdul Hamid. He had come on an Austrian warship to Durazzo, and there they had tried to kill him, and he had come secretly, as we had come, to Valona. Valona was the only free village in Albania then, except our mountain villages. There was a council in his house. Chiefs of all the tribes from Kossova to Janina were there, and when the council was ended Ismail Kemal Bey brought the flag of Scanderbeg, which had always been hidden in his house, and with a rope he made it run to the top of a pole on his house. It was the red flag with the two-headed black eagle on it. I stood in the street and saw it go to the top of the pole. The chiefs were on the balcony, and Ismail Kemal Bey wept. Many men had tears on their cheeks. In the streets they cried, 'Rroft Shqiperia!' and embraced one another. They said that the spirit of Scanderbeg lived, and that Albania was free. But I said, 'The time has not come when I can hang my gun on the wall or cut my beard.' 725

"The next night I started secretly back through the Serbian lines with Ahmet and the chiefs of Kossova, to come to our own mountains and kill the Serbs. We had been twenty-two days in Valona, and for those twenty-two days I had not been a *comitadj*[1]. I was glad to be one again."

For the moment the fortunes of war were with the drangojt; the heavier clouds had been driven ooo

[1] [Bandit-- Analyst]

000 away, and a pale sunshine fell on Shoshi, which looked like a water-color picture in a gray frame. Our side of the valley was in shadow, but the rain had ceased and we should have been going on. I was held by a still unsatisfied curiosity about that bandit.

579 "I thought bandits were highwaymen," I murmured, and, unwilling to ask interpreters to put the question that was in my mind, I laid the burden on my own lame knowledge of their language. "You kill Serbs?" I asked. "How do you get money?"

The whiskered face seemed to smile broadly at this boldness. "I get it on the trails," he said.

"From Albanians?"

"I get it where I can," he answered, indifferently. "The Austrians had money, and there were many Austrians in Albania. This rifle came into the mountains on an Austrian officer. I gave his clothes to a naked man of Dibra who was fighting the Serbs there. I got four Italian capes and trousers in one day, on the road north of Scutari, and there was money on their bodies, too. As to Albanians—there was a rich Albanian once, whom I met riding out from Ipek. Why should a man of Albanian blood ride in the eyes of the Serbs with gold in his pocket, while true Albanians are dying of cold and hunger? I took from him everything he had, and left him on the trail as naked as he came to the cradle. I said to him, 'You are the Sultan, and I am the Grand

Vizier. In your name I will give these things to 579
your people, and they will be grateful.'"

We laughed hastily.

"But it is time to cut your beard and hang 000
your rifle on the wall," Perolli suggested. "There is a free Albanian government now."

"But not a free Albania," said the bandit. "The government forgets that, and sits in council with the Powers that sold us to Italy and gave us to Serbia. Have you forgotten Kossova and a million of your brothers who are slaves to the Serbs?"

"I am of Ipek," Perolli answered him. "Nevertheless, I am first a Shqiptar and second a man of Kossova. And I remember our proverb that says, 'Better an egg to-day than a chicken next [538]
year.'"

"We have also a saying, 'Better the nightingale once than the blackbird every day,'" replied the bandit.

"Let it be. 'Every sheep hangs by her own leg,'" Perolli retorted, rising.

The honors were with him. For the moment, the bandit could think of no proverb which would be a weapon, and could only reply to our courteous farewells by wishing us smooth trails.

"The good man of yesterday becomes a burden to-day and a danger to-morrow," said Perolli, as we went slowly along the ledge of trail. "Why is it that our minds do not change as rapidly as the world changes around us? These mountain men will cling to their rifles, though the time is

000 past when killing will solve our problems. Stupidity! But sometimes I think the whole world is stupid."

We agreed with little assenting sounds, our minds too much occupied with the difficulty of the way to spend energy on words. We were absorbed in the narrow, slippery trail running rust red along a cliff that wept iron. Only when we paused for breath did we see the beautiful valley of the Lumi Shala beneath us. The rain was falling gently now, a wavering veil of gray chiffon over the mountains that ran a scale of paling blues to the white peaks in the west. Below them little fields were green, burgeoning woods were faintly rainbow misted with colors of new leaves, and there was a foam of plum blossom and a sudden rosy note from a solitary peach tree.

533 We looked in silence. And when we resumed our toiling way, Perolli began to sing. It was a song with springtime in it, a song like the valley of the Lumi Shala, an Albanian song of strangely pitched half notes and indescribable transitions, breaking at intervals into the burbling melody of a bird's throat. We listened entranced; we begged him to sing it again.

"It is called 'The Mountain Song,'" he said. "But it isn't one of the songs of the trails; it is a song of the large villages of Kossova. I think it isn't more than fifty or sixty years old, because it is a love song. Love songs are new in Albania, and you find them only in the villages." And he sang:

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

533 "How beautiful is the month of May
When we go with the flocks to the mountains!
On the mountains we heard the voice of the wind.
Do you remember how happy we were?

"In the month of May, through the blossoming trees,
The sound of song is abroad on the mountains.
The song of the nightingale, ge re ge re ge re.
Do you remember how happy we were?

"I would I had died in that month of May—
When you leaned on my breast and kissed me, saying,
'I do not wish to live without you.'
Do you remember how happy we were?

"I wish again for the month of May
That again we might be on the mountains,
That again we might hear the mountain voices.
Have you forgotten those days of beauty?"

000 Again and again he sang it, while we tried to follow with our voices those unwritten notes that express so much more clearly than any words the beauty and fleetingness of spring. And when, unexpectedly, we came upon five young men drawn up in a line to greet us, we could not believe that the way had been so short and that we had come to the village of Shala.

It was indeed Shala, and in a moment we were being welcomed by the padre and escorted up a stone stairway into his rooms above the church.

These were better rooms than Padre Marjan's; the windows were not broken and the walls were solid. But they were bitterly cold, and this priest was not our Father Marjan. He was

○○○older, squarer, more sturdy, his hair was iron gray, and his presence was commanding—so commanding that it was a bit chilly. He led us formally into a large, bare room, where there were a long table and four hand-made chairs; he gave us each a chair and himself remained standing, talking with grave formality, in Albanian, to Perolli. Little pools of water spread around our feet, as though we were umbrellas.

We sat there half an hour, an hour, an hour and a half. There was no fire; the room had the feeling of a room that has never had a fire in it. We suggested to Perolli that he take us into the kitchen to get warm, but he silenced us with a glance; indeed, it was obvious that we were in the hospitable hands of the priest and that it would be an unforgivable affront to make such a suggestion to him.

We were so cold from the first, holding ourselves so tight to prevent our shivering from becoming uncontrollable, that I do not know when the real chills began. It was Alex's gray-blue lips and cheeks that first alarmed me. I said to Perolli that he *must* get us warmed. He said that before long we would have something to eat, and that would warm us.

Then I saw Alex's cheeks turn to a hot, burning red, and I said: "Perolli! You've got to get Alex a chance to get into dry clothes. Can't you see she's ill?"

"Are you ill?" said Perolli, and, "Oh no, no, not at all!" said Alex, her teeth chattering together. "I would like to lie down, if I could, but it's all right."

Another half hour went by, lengthening into an hour. Alex seemed still more ill to me, though I could not see her very well; she grew very, very large before my eyes and then very small and far away. My head ached, and just as I thought I was warm at last, I would be disappointed again by a chill that made me clench my teeth and grip my chair. But when I saw Alex's head fall forward as though she were faint, I could stand it no longer. I got up.

"Perolli," I said, "tell our host we've got to get Alex dry and warm. If you don't I'll undress her and rub her right here!"

I would have said more, but I couldn't. A pain like a knife stabbed through my lungs, and before I could catch my breath stabbed neatly again. It's the kind of pain you can't describe; if you've felt it you know it, and if you haven't, you can't. I recognized it; it had struck me years before and laid me in a hospital for six weeks. Pneumonia!

There's a kind of clan morality that controls us. It has nothing to do with the moralities of religions or races or states; it is a group affair, and the groups seem roughly to be made by common occupations. Soldiers must conceal, and deny, their natural fear of death. Labor-union men must let their children starve before they "scab." Farmers must not let their stock break through fences, or let a bit of unused land become a nursery for weeds. Employers—and one sees this, now, everywhere in Europe—must not pay higher wages than other employers, however easy and more efficient it may be to do so. Women who are married, or expect to marry, must not let a man's fancy wander from the woman who claims him. Doctors must let a patient die rather than take the case from another doctor. And women like Alex and Frances and me—for whom there is no generic term, except the meaningless "modern women" —must never, so long as they can keep on their feet, admit that they are ill.

How Alex felt I don't know; for myself, I was in a blue panic. I have never wanted anything so much as I wanted to collapse right there, in sheer terror. Pneumonia, in Shala, a hundred and fifty miles from a doctor, from medicines, 753 from even a bed. Pneumonia, among the Albanians, whose only medical knowledge of it was that it came from drinking rain water!

Perolli had been surprised by my exclamation. "Why didn't you say you were uncomfortable?" he said to Alex. "If I'd had any idea——"

"I'm all right," said Alex, getting the words out quickly and shutting her teeth hard.

"Well, what are you fussing about, then?" said Perolli to me, anxiously. "I'd take you girls to a fire if I could, but, you see, they're cooking in the kitchen, and naturally the padre doesn't want to take his guests there. We've been here three hours now; dinner ought to be

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

ready before long, and you'll be all right as soon as you've had something to eat."

That pain stabbed through my lungs again, taking all my breath and engaging all my self-control, and I wilted. I wasn't the good sport Alex was.

"I know I'm abominably rude," I said, "but I'm too tired. I want to lie down. Ask the padre if there isn't somewhere we can lie down till dinner."

It was too bad. Guests shouldn't behave like that. There was another room, and it had a mattress on the floor, but there was no candle; a bit of blazing wood must be brought from the kitchen to light me into it; our bags must be fetched; the household was quite upset. I apologized and apologized, but at last I was able to tear off my sopping stockings, pull some of our blankets over me, and lie down in the darkness. I was falling into a kind of stupor. I could not get off my soaking garments, but it did not matter, fever kept me even too warm in them, and in a moment I—as the old-time novelists say—knew no more. During that moment I felt some one crawling on the mattress beside me, put out a hand, and touched Alex's blazing cheek.

We were awakened and brought out to dinner. It did not seem real. I remember it like a delirium. There was hot soup, but each mouthful seemed a cannon ball to get through a closing throat, and there were corn bread and goat's-milk cheese; the padre stood at the head of the table through the meal, holding the torch. He did not eat with us, Perolli said, because we were using all the dishes he had. It transpired, too, that there was but the one mattress in the house. The padre's niece slept on it; he himself slept on the floor with a blanket. The niece was a sweet, round-cheeked little girl of about fourteen, quite the German Fräulein; she had been educated in Vienna and Munich, and seemed most desperately lonely in Shala, hungry for companionship and talk of the things she knew; but since the war and the wreck of central Europe she must stay in Shala. I saw a tragedy there. But I saw it very dimly through the mist of pain and fever.

Alex and I took the mattress, with the simple, direct selfishness of miserable animals; it was very narrow, but we lay head to foot on it and managed. Frances, Perolli, and Rexh slept in blankets beside us on the floor. All night long Alex moaned in her sleep, and I could not tell the difference between reality and delirium; only the knives in my lungs brought me out of the mists now and then to hear the ceaseless pouring sound of rain and feel the damp chill of the room.

In the gray morning Alex and I sat up and looked at each other.

"How do you feel?" said I.

"Fine," said she. "Have you a fever?"

"Fever? Not a bit," said I. "But I've been thinking. It's the tenth, and I absolutely must

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

be in Paris by the twentieth. It's most important—a business matter. So I don't think I'd better go on with you into the Merdite country. I think I'd better go back to Scutari and catch the boat from Durazzo next Tuesday."

"But you can't make it out of these mountains alone!" said she. "It's a hundred and fifty miles and you don't know the trails or the language."

"Oh yes, I can!" I said. "Don't talk nonsense, Alex dear."

"Well, you know what it is. It is up to you," said she. (How I love women for the way they love you and yet leave you free!) "Only, if you did have a fever, you realize it would be dangerous to try to make it, in this weather."

"If I had a fever, it strikes me it would be equally dangerous to stay here," I replied. "And I must be in Paris, on the job, by the twentieth."

"Well, if it's the job——" said she, and called Perolli.

Perolli was deep in politics, and paused only a moment to say that if he had any authority over me he would not listen for a moment to such a mad notion; but I told him he hadn't and asked him to get me a guide. He said he did not know the men here, but would do his best, and by the time I was dressed he brought the guide, a slim, too-handsome youth who spoke Italian and swore to get me to Scutari in two days.

Frances said that if I would insist on going, I must take Rexh with me; and I said I would not dream of it, I would not think of letting that twelve-year-old give up the trip into the farther mountains. All along the way he had thought of little else, and half his sentences had begun, "When we get into the Merdite country——" We argued about it, Frances patient and I surprised to find how bad tempered I could be. The packs must be rearranged, and I kept putting my hand down on things that were not there; everything moved with incredible slowness, and eternities passed before I cut short the interminable formalities of farewell and plunged out into the cool, delightful rain.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BACKWARD TRAIL—THE MAN OF SHALA HAS A SENSE OF HUMOR—THE BYRAKTOR OF SHOSHI HEARS THAT THE EARTH IS ROUND.

WE started down the bed of a waterfall, the guide and I; the bad going, the exhausting force of the current, my dizziness and breath-taking pains, made the first half mile a blur. When we came out on a cliff edge I sat down, and then for the first time I saw Rexh. He stood very gravely, watching me; the rain had melted the dye in his red fez and little streams of it ran down his round, serious face.

"It is much better for me to come with you, Mrs. Lane," he said. "You do not know the language, and this Shala man he is a bad man."

"But, Rexh, my dear!" I said. "No, no! You must go back to Miss Hardy and say that I say you cannot come." He might never again have an opportunity to see that farther interior country; it was a trip to dream of for years and to remember always afterward. I had not asked him to give it up; I did not want him to. I was safe enough; all the tribal laws protected me; no one had any motive for injuring me, and the Shala man, however bad, knew that I had no money and that he would be well paid when he delivered me in Scutari.

"All that is true, Mrs. Lane. But I think it best for me to come with you," said Rexh, inflexibly. And because I really had no strength for combating such determination, I got up and went on, the Shala man going before, with my pack protected by a poncho on his back, and Rexh following after.

We climbed up cliffs and lowered ourselves down them; we slipped and slid and jumped down more little waterfalls; we waded knee-deep streams and struggled over decomposed shale that clutched at our feet like sand; we came down a switchback trail to the banks of the Lumi Shala, and the Shala man carried me across it, on top of his pack. It was all like a nightmare, of which I remember clearly only my thirst. Though I was as wet as anything that lives in the sea, I could not get enough to drink, and every one of the millions of springs invited my drinking cup. Rexh, whose endless task was to fill it for me, protested. "In the rains, the water makes you sick," he said. "It turns to knives inside you. You will be sick, Mrs. Lane."

He was the funniest figure you can imagine, in a suit of striped American flannelette pajamas and the red fez that poured a dozen little wavering streams of dye over his forehead and down his cheeks.

If I were in France, I knew, the doctors would put me in a hot room with all the windows closed, and insist that I must not have much water. In America I would be given fresh air and water, and bathed to keep down the fever. Well, I was in Albania, and I reasoned that, if I was to have pneumonia, I might as well have it on the mountain trails as in a cold, wet house, and when I got to Scutari I could be as ill as I liked, with very little bother to anybody.

"If the water makes me sick, Rexh, and if I become *gogoli*, with a wild spirit of the mountains entered into me, you are not to mind," I said. "You are to get me down to Scutari somehow; above all things, do not let me stay in a native house."

"Yes, Mrs. Lane." Then we began to climb up the next mountain, and, kneeling on a bowlder above me to help pull me up its side, Rexh said: "Your hand is like a hot coal, Mrs. Lane, and this is not such a very big bowlder. I think we must get a *mooshk*."

"What is a *mooshk?*"

"He is what you ride on. I forget the English word—with long ears and very little feet."

"A mule?"

"Yes, that is it. We must get a mule for you to ride."

"Oh, do you think we can? Ask the Shala man if he knows where there is one."

The Shala man, to my joy—but Rexh looked doubtful—said at once that there was one at the next house. So we went into it, and sat for some time by the fire, and were given coffee, our steaming clothes making the place like a Turkish bath. But there was no mule; the Shala man said we would find one at the next house. The houses were perhaps a quarter of a mile apart here, scattered along the mountain sides above the Lumi Shala, and the Shala man stopped at every one of them. There would be a delirium of struggling up slopes so steep that I could go, as it were, on all fours, without having to admit that my knees were limp, and then of staggering downward, and then an interval of smoke and fire and thick, sweet coffee, and then out into the water again. At last I began really to protest.

"I won't go into this house," I said, flatly. "We ought to make forty miles at least before we stop, if we're to get to Scutari in three days. We have to keep going all the time. I'm not going to stop in any more houses."

"Mrs. Lane, we have to," said Rexh.

"But why? It's nonsense! This man's saying always that the mule is at the next house. These people know whether there's a mule in the village or not. We needn't stop in every house."

"Yes, we do, Mrs. Lane. We are in Shoshi and this man will be killed if he does not take care. You do not look like a woman, Mrs. Lane. You look like a Montenegrin man, in those pants and that long gray coat. He has to stop in every house, so that the people will see he is traveling with a woman."

"But, Rexh, I thought we were going through Pultit."

"This is Shoshi, Mrs. Lane."

PEAKS OF SHALA

The Shala man, tall and young and very conscious that he was handsome, stood easily on the slope beside us, rain running over him as though he were a stone in a stream, his rifle held carefully protected from the wet by a fold of the poncho. He seemed entirely happy.

"What do you mean," said I, furiously "by bringing me through Shoshi when you agreed to take me through Pultit?" And when Rexh, like a small image of an accusing judge, had translated, the Shala man looked like an artless child surprised in innocent mischief.

"He says he thought it would be fun. Because they can't kill him while you're here, and he likes to go into their houses and drink coffee," said Rexh.

I sat for some moments on the streaming bowlder, wiping my streaming face now and then with my hand, and staring at that man with the peculiar sense of humor. So he thought it funny, did he, to bring me through a tribe whose rifles were oiled to kill him, and to sit at their firesides, perfectly safe in my protection? Fastened in my own little affairs like a turtle in his shell, I sat there, black with rage, thinking that I would like to murder him, myself. Then suddenly I put out my head and saw the wide world, and the spectacle of us three, dripping there on that immense and drenched landscape in the middle of Albania—the innocent Shala man who had been delightedly thumbing his nose at Shoshi's warriors, the small, serious Rexh

PEAKS OF SHALA

ooo with a map of tiny red rivers over his face, and me, who looked like a Montenegrin man, all of us so intently solemn——

But the vision was disastrous, for laughter set the knives slashing through my lungs again, and I did not know how much of the rain on my face was tears before I was able to speak.

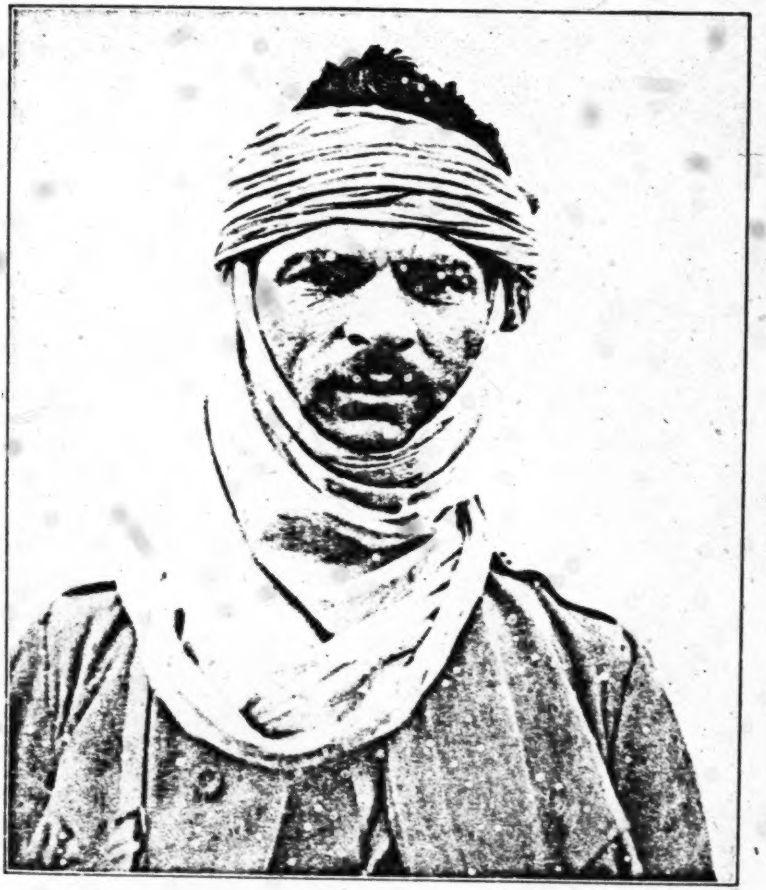
"Tell him I hope he enjoyed the joke, for it's over," I said. "You're Mohammedan, Rexh, and safe; just call to the house and tell them who I am, and ask if they have a mule. And when they ask us in, tell them glory to their house, but I cannot stop; I have made a vow to get to Scutari."

The Shala man was so downcast at passing one household he could not crow over, that my harshness would have relented under any other circumstances. But I was convinced that I was in for pneumonia, and every impulse in me concentrated in one obsession—to get to Scutari.

"After this, Rexh, you are managing this party," I said.

"Yes, Mrs. Lane," said he, toiling up the trail like a small pajama-clad gnome. And with all the sagacity and resource with which he manages his household of younger refugee children in Scutari, he took charge. The clearest picture that remains to me of that day is that of Rexh, his head tipped back and the staff in his left hand firmly planted, while with his right forefinger he sternly laid down the law to a thoroughly cowed Shala man.

291



THE SHALA GUIDE
Who took the author through Shoshi for a joke

248a

It was Rexh who decreed that he carry the pack, while the Shala man carried me up the worst of the slopes; it was he who sent a man from one of the houses to climb the nearest mountain and call down the valley that we were searching for a mule; it was he who decided when we should stop to eat.

He and the Shala man ate cold meat and corn bread and goat's-milk cheese, beside a fire on the earth floor of one of the houses, and it was there that a violent-looking man, with a scarred face, clothed in the merest fragments of rags, tried to terrify me into giving him an order on the Red Cross in Scutari for clothes. He was a guest in the house; he had been driven from his own village by the Serbs; his wife and all his children had been killed around him; and I think he was a little mad.

"Give me clothes!" said he, thrusting his horrible face almost against mine, one hand on the wooden-handled knife in his grimy sash. "You Americans have given clothes to others! Give them to me!"

"Tell him that all the American clothes are gone, all of them have been given away, and there are no more. And tell him that in any case I am not of the Red Cross and cannot give him an order. I am very, very sorry."

"Write! Write me clothes on your pieces of paper!" the man snarled, and if Rexh had not sat so calmly beside me I would have thought he meant to strike me with the knife he ooo drew. The incident was like the horror in a nightmare.

"Tell him I can write on paper," I said, shrugging, "but the paper will not get him clothes." So he sat down, muttering. I was glad when Rexh said we would go on, for I did not, like the Shala man, delight in receiving courtesy at the hands of those people who so gladly would have killed him.

We went on over the trails, driven by the unflagging Rexh. His quiet persistency really maddened the Shala man; it was like that of a fly. He drove the Shala man onward without a pause, up and down cliffs, over bridges of logs just missed by roaring cascades, through streams where currents made him stagger. Surely half the time Rexh demanded that the Shala man carry me; the rest of the time the two were pulling me upward, or letting me downward, by both hands, as though I were a bundle. And just as the light was failing we stood on the brink of the most magnificent cañon of which I have ever dreamed.

There were depths below depths of it, falling away from narrow green terrace to terrace, and far down, at the edge of a drop that looked as though it were a crack sheer to the center of the world, there was a stone house. From the other side of the chasm a tilted slab of rock rose up into the clouds—a stupendous great sweep like a wing of the Victory of Samothrace, and it was striped in jagged lines of green and gray and rose and white, hundreds of stripes, each as wide as the stone house down in the blue distance.

We knew it was a large house; we could hardly have seen it if it had been a small one; it looked as large as a match box.

"The byraktor of Shoshi lives there, Mrs. Lane, and I think we had better stay with him to-night," said Rexh. "There is a priest, but he is four miles farther down the valley, and we would have to come back in the morning, for this is where the trail begins to cross the mountains to Scutari. Also, if there is a mule in Shoshi, the byraktor will know him."

So we began dropping down to the house, the [487] Shala man much pleased by the adventure of calling upon his enemies' war chief. We went easily, for the way was a gigantic staircase of cliff and terraced green field. Each field had its little house of stone; the trails down the cliff were broadened and held up by walls of stone. True, the centers of the trails were running ankle deep in water and springs gushed from every wall, but the effect was of ease and order and fresh green things, and before we reached the house of the byraktor my head was clearer and my breath no longer stabbing pains.

How to account for it I do not know; I am sure that in happier conditions I should have had pneumonia. But the fact is that after nearly forty miles of incredibly difficult journeying over those mountains in twelve rain-drenched hours, I came to the byraktor's fire weak, it is true, and

PEAKS OF SHALA

000 trembling like a convalescent, but with fever gone and my lungs merely aching. I suggest the remedy for what it is worth.

[417] The byraktor received us at his gateway, for his house was surrounded by a high fence, almost a stockade, of woven branches. He was a tall, keen, quick man; bright, dark eyes and aquiline nose and thin, flexible lips, framed by the white turban's fold beneath his chin; a jacket of black sheep's wool; one massive jeweled silver chain on his breast. His swift smile was warm and beautiful, but one had a sense of reservations behind it; he welcomed the audacious Shala man without a quiver, and ushered us up the stone steps to the second floor of his house.

[342] There were several rooms[1] divided from the main large one by partitions of woven willow boughs, and from the large room a high, arched doorway in the stone wall led into farther regions.
592 At least forty men and women and children—five generations—were around the fire on the floor.[1] There was a little flurry of welcome and rearrangement, and in a moment we were in the center of the circle, sitting on thick mats of woven straw, while the byraktor made our coffee in the coals.

[302] The women were beautifully dressed; I had not seen so much elegance of embroidery, of colored headkerchiefs, earrings, and chains of silver and gold coins. Their dark, beautifully modeled faces, large dark eyes, and heavy braids of black hair were set off by the profusion of rich

[1] [House of war chief of Shoshi — [252] Analyst]

color. Most of them were sitting on low stools, 592
embroidering or working opangi, and the white-garbed men lounged at their feet, closer to the fire, resting on elbows and smoking.

There was the delicate negotiation about the 000
mule. The byraktor owned one, but he did not want to take it to Scutari. I left that to Rexh; the byraktor listened to him as courteously as though the boy had been twenty years older, and Rexh bargained with him as with an equal. A hundred kronen, Rexh said, tentatively, at last, but even at that terrific price the byraktor did not seem eager to make the trip (for, of course, he himself would go where his mule went) and Rexh thought best to drop the question for a while.

"Where do you come from?" one of the youths 823
asked me; and when I had replied, "In what direction from here is America?"

"California, the part of America from which I come," I answered—and did not very greatly stretch the truth—"is directly through the earth, on the other side."

Why they* sat up in such excitement I did not know; I had expected surprise, but not such a volley of questions, not such a visible sensation. Rexh sat replying to them, earnestly explaining, making a gesture now and then; their eyes followed his hands, fascinated. His talk became a monologue; it went on and on; all work stopped, cigarettes burned to heedless fingers, the coffee bubbled unnoticed by the byraktor. Little Rexh,

* [Shoshi people at [253] warchief's house --Analyst]

823 sitting erect in his pajama coat, the streaks of red dye now dried fantastically on his chubby face, held them all spellbound, while I begged him in vain to tell me what he was saying.

"It is nothing, Mrs. Lane," he answered me, at last. "I am telling them about the map. I am telling them that the map is not flat, as it looks, but round, like a ball."

He was telling them that the earth was round! And hearing my voice, they appealed to me in a bombardment of questions.

"Is the earth really round?"

"Yes."

"You have seen it? You know that it is round?"

"Yes."

"You have been around it, yourself?"

"Yes," I said, mendaciously.

They sat back and considered this. Then they asked particulars. They could understand that the earth was curved, for they had seen that the mountains were not flat, so it would be possible for the earth to be curved. But were the seas curved also? Would water curve? I said that it would, that, indeed, it did.

Had I been upon the great spaces of water and seen that they were curved?

I had been upon the seas, I said, and they were curved. They did not look curved, because the earth was so large and the eye saw so little of it, but they were curved, for one could go quite around the earth on them.

They smoked over this for some time. The 823
byraktor rescued his coffee pot, in deep abstraction. I did not expect them to believe what I had said. How could they? It must have appeared to them the wildest of fairy tales (although in all Albania there are no fairies, and therefore—I suppose that is the reason—there are no Albanian fairy tales). Men suffered much at the hands of our ancestors for telling them the monstrous idea that the flat earth is round. I wished I knew what thoughts were taking shape behind those dark Albanian eyes.

Then the byraktor looked up. "If the solid earth is round," he said, "and if the water lies upon it in a curve, then this earth is moving very rapidly. For if the earth were standing still the water would fall off."

My astonishment was profound. I felt myself 000
a child beside that mind, and I thought that a man who could so wrestle with a new fact and evolve from it an even more amazing conclusion was no man for me to contend with in a little matter of hiring a mule and getting, somehow, to Scutari.

Presently large flocks of sheep and goats were 231
driven through the room[1], past the fire, and into 562
the darkness beyond the arched doorway. Rain-drenched shepherdesses, half clad in rags, followed them, and having, with much noise of tearing branches, given them their dried oak boughs to eat during the night, the shepherdesses returned and sat by the fire, addressing the byraktor in tones of accustomed equality.

[1] [In house of Shoshi warchief [255] -- Analyst]

000 There was a constant movement in the room—women coming and going, nursing their babies and tucking blankets more tightly over the cradles, undressing the smaller children, who played naked about the fire until they were taken, unprotesting, to their blankets in other rooms, and bringing casks of water, and making corn bread.

One could always amuse the women by asking them about ages; they guessed mine all the way from sixteen to forty, and there was one of them, a splendid, smiling woman, good natured and competent, whose age I guessed to be forty. She laughed aloud, showing all her white, perfect teeth, and said that she was seventy-two, and that the byraktor was her daughter's son.

[753] "You have been drinking the new water," she said, wisely, though I had not mentioned the ache of my breathing. "You have the feeling of knives here," and she touched her chest. "But do not worry; it is all right; it is only the water, and when the rain stops you will not feel them any more." And she patted my shoulder comfortingly.

The question of the mule still hung unsettled. The byraktor seemed to be thinking deeply; he asked the Shala man many questions about Rrok Perolli. I caught the name and asked Rexh to listen, for I felt myself surrounded by web within web of intrigue, but Rexh said that the Shala man had nothing to tell, except that Perolli was in the mountains. I wondered whether to tell the byraktor that Shala had sworn a *besa* with ooo the Tirana government, and then thought best not venture into mazes that I did not understand. But the byraktor was greatly interested on learning that I had been in Montenegro, and all that I knew about that part of Jugo-Slavia I told him; it was very little, but he seemed to see more than I did in the robbery of the Serbian Minister of Finance by Montenegrin bandits.

"The story was in the newspapers," I told him. "Some day there will be newspapers in Albania, and schools in the mountains, and then you will learn about these things when they happen."

"I have heard about the school in Thethis," 735
he answered. "Schools are very good, but what 871
my people need is food and clothes. We are very poor. We have too little land. A school is of no use to a child who is hungry, for hunger has no brains with which to learn. I do not care for a school in Shoshi until all my people have enough bread. It is not right to give the well-fed child a school, too; he has already more than other children, and the school will only make him wiser and prouder than the poorer ones. Already the families with fewer children are stronger than those with many, and that is not right. I do not want a school; I want land for my people, for food comes from land, and after food comes the school. There is no hope for the mountain people while enemies hold our valleys. First the Romans, then the Turks, then the 000

PEAKS OF SHALA

000 Austrians and Italians, and always, always the Serbs! And it may be that the Serbs will be too strong for us and that we shall all die fighting them."

After that he went to the other side of the fire, beside his grandmother, and he sat for a long time talking to her. "Shkodra," I heard, which is the Albanian name of Scutari, and "*mooshk*," and I knew he was talking of me and the mule I wanted to hire, but why it should be such a long and grave discussion I did not understand.

264 Then we had dinner,⊼ served on several little tables, that all might eat at the same time, and the men and women ate together, but only the youngest and most beautiful woman ate at the byraktor's table, silent and respectful, dipping her long, aristocratic fingers diffidently in the dish. I thought she was his wife, but Rexh said no, she was his son's bride, still in those six months when she must not speak until spoken to, nor sit unless asked, and the byraktor liked her very much and wished to make her feel at home, because she was lonely for her own tribe.

000 After we had all washed our hands for the second time, and the men had had an after-dinner smoke—I still turned my head from the proffered cigarettes—the byraktor said that he would himself escort me to-morrow on the road to Scutari. I should ride his mule, and it was arranged that we should start at four o'clock.

⊼ [At house of Shoshi warchief -- Analyst]

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

CHAPTER XIV

A NIGHT BY THE BYRAKTOR'S FIRE—THE BYRAKTOR CALLS A COUNCIL—REXH TO THE RESCUE—THE BYRAKTOR'S GENDARME TEARS A PONCHO—MOONLIGHT ON THE SCUTARI PLAIN.

THEN his[1] grandmother made three beds, 513 on three sides of the fire. She brought a two-inch-thick mat of woven straw and laid it on the floor; over it she spread a handsome blanket of goats' hair dyed in stripes of magenta and purple; under one end of the mat she put a triangular piece of wood to serve as pillow, and when I lay down she tucked other blankets over me. Rexh and the Shala man had the other mats, and all the byraktor's family went to their own places, leaving the big room and the dying fire to us three guests.

At four in the morning the house[1] was astir. 512 Out of the darkness yawning men came to stir the slumbering fire; the byraktor appeared without his turban, a weird figure with his shaven, [302] skin-white head and long black scalplock, and began to make the morning coffee; the sheep and goats were driven out into the rain by the ragged shepherdesses. I sat up and put on my 000 opangi, and the sleepy Rexh, still streaked with red dye from his fez, rolled out of his blankets.

[1] [Shoshi war chief's -- [259] Analyst]

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

PEAKS OF SHALA

ooo "To-day," I said, "we get to Scutari." For the pains in my lungs had returned and I had lain all night half waking, haunted by fever visions and voices.

"Yes, yes," said the Shala man. "I swear it! To-day we get to Scutari!" But the byraktor looked at him, saying nothing, a quizzical look in his dark eyes, and leisurely went on with his coffee making.

"Rexh," I said at five o'clock, "why don't they start?"

"I don't know, Mrs. Lane," he replied, earnestly. "They will not tell." He sat listening to every casual word, and thinking deeply. A dozen times I had suggested that we should be starting.

"Tell the byraktor we must go!" I said at six o'clock, impatient in the doorway. For a long time all the world had been a clear gray, shadowed only by the falling rain. "I pay a hundred kronen for his mule only because it gets me to Scutari to-night."

Rexh announced this firmly to the byraktor; the byraktor, listening attentively, assented with a shake of his head.

[88] At seven o'clock I walked madly up and down the small stone porch.† The byraktor's gendarme had arrived; he stood washing his face in a stone basin filled with rain water; at every splash in it he raised his head and solemnly crossed himself and made the sign of the cross toward the dawn. Inside the house, the byraktor was deep in conversation with his grandmother.

†[At house of Shoshi [260] warchief -- Analyst]

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

PEAKS OF SHALA

"They are talking politics, Mrs. Lane," Rexh reported. "I do not yet quite understand, but I think that you will not get to Scutari to-day."

"Rexh," I said, "listen to me. I shall get to Scutari to-day. In ten minutes by my watch I shall start to walk to Scutari, without the mule. I have waited long enough. Tell that to the byraktor."

The byraktor came to the door and looked at me kindly. He had put on his turban; he was a figure of rather awe-inspiring dignity. "Slowly slowly, little by little," said he, indulgently, and went back into the house.

When eight minutes had passed his grandmother came out—I was now walking restlessly up and down the soaked, corn-stalk-strewn yard—and led out of the lower part of the house the mule. The mule was the very smallest donkey I have ever seen, the most bedraggled, the most violently antagonistic to all the world. The woman tied him to the wicker fence and brought out a measure of corn. "Slowly, slowly," said she to me, triumphantly. "One cannot start until the mule has eaten." Then she went back to her talk with her grandson, the byraktor.

A moment later I interrupted them by the most courteous of farewells. I blessed them and their house and their past and their future, their families, their tribe, their hospitality, and their mule, and then I left. The Shala man followed me, protesting; Rexh trudged beside me, saying nothing, but very disapproving.

PEAKS OF SHALA

000 "You cannot do such a thing to the byraktor of Shoshi!" said the Shala man.

"I have done it to the byraktor of Shoshi," said I, violently, gasping on the trail. I kept my knees stiff with sheer rage, but on the first terrace above the byraktor's house not even that could keep me going, and I sat down in a heap on the trail to rest.

The sun had not yet cleared the top of the stupendous sweep of striped rock that soared above the chasm; it could hardly do so before noon. The cañon was filled with silver light; the rain itself seemed silver; the rose and blue and white of that great cliff glowed softly through it, and the greens of the little fields below were soft as mist. I sat looking at this, and insensibly realizing why time was so little to these people, and how unimportant, really, all our little hastes are.

Then, coming leisurely across the green, like little toys on a carpet, appeared the byraktor, his gendarme, and the minute mule. In half an hour they reached us, calm and unperturbed.
492 The donkey bore a wooden saddle quite as large as himself; they placed me on this and leisurely began to climb.

"To-night," said I, firmly, "I shall be in Scutari."

Rexh translated this to the byraktor, but the byraktor said nothing.

We proceeded slowly over the mountains.* This was wilder going than I had yet seen, and

* [From Shoshi to Scutari -- Analyst]

again the simplicity of these people was borne 492 in upon me. Coming to places that, to any European understanding, would be absolutely impassable, the byraktor's action was simple and direct. He wrapped around his wrist the steel chain that held the mule by the neck, and easily, without haste, he went on. The mule came, too; it could not do otherwise, and when it would have fallen the steel chain and the gendarme's firm grip on its tail kept it going until its feet got their grip again. I was, of course, on the mule's back, and where it went I went, too.

The byraktor and the gendarme thought 000 nothing of thus casually carrying between them a mule with me on its back, and very shortly—so adaptable is the human mind—I thought little of it myself. I recall sitting there, comfortable in that armchair of a saddle, taking my smoked glasses out of my pocket and polishing them; the sun was piercing through the clouds, and the glare on the snow above was blinding to my eyes. We were passing along a trail really too narrow for the mule; my knees grazed a cliff; a glance over my shoulder went straight down into depths where pine-tree tops looked like a lawn; at every second the mule's tiny hoofs slipped and rocks showered downward, the chain tightened around the byraktor's wrist and the muscles of his shoulders knotted as the mule's weight bore on them. It crossed my mind, as I settled the smoked glasses on my nose, that two weeks earlier my heart would have stopped at

000 very sight of that trail, and then, as it dipped downward and I heard the gendarme bracing his feet and felt the mule's weight sag against the strength of that useful tail, I looked up and forgot everything else in the magnificence of shadow and sunshine on the snow-piled heights.

I do not mean that I am at all unusual in my attitude to danger. I'm not, and the prospect of sudden death scares me stiff, as it does everyone else. I mean that human beings are all chameleons. The stuff of humanity is always the same, it merely takes on different colors from its environment; in Albania there is not one of us who will not become Albanian. There are many morals to be drawn from this; you may apply the idea to education, or to your attitude toward immigrants or capitalists or criminals or even to your next-door neighbor; it would be useful also in considering international politics or religions that are not yours, or the actions of men in war,
484 but I did not draw any morals, being immediately engaged in crossing the foot of the largest waterfall I had yet encountered. ‡

It was so large that the men unsaddled the mule, stripped themselves, and wrapped their clothes in several bundles before attempting to cross it. Then they made a living chain of themselves; the byraktor, at its head, advanced to a water-worn bowlder in the center of the current, braced himself firmly, and became the pivot on which the chain moved. The end man carried over the clothes, bundle by bundle, wrapped in

‡ [on return trip, Shoshi to Scutari'--Analyst]

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EG1 Albania EG1

my poncho; then he carried me across—I was 484
soaked in spray, but that did not matter. Then he put one arm around the donkey and supported it across, and then the saddle, and then he went back once more and took the protesting Rexh and brought him over. The water was above their waists; their white bodies slanted in the glassy current; three yards below them the water poured in a crystal mass over the edge of the pool, a second waterfall that struck in roaring foam fifty feet below.

The worst of the current was between me and the central rock where the byraktor was braced; several times the end man's feet slipped there, notably when he crossed with the donkey, which I gave up for lost, but each time the chain of hands held firm.

Their bodies came blue from the icy water, but they put on only their cotton underdrawers, for they said we would next go through the snow, and they did not want to get their beautifully embroidered trousers wet; for the same reason they left their purple, gold-embroidered socks and rawhide opangi in the packs, and went on barefoot.

"Good! If we're crossing the snow fields 622
already, we'll surely be in Scutari by to-night," I said. But I was joyful too soon, for when we reached the first of the snow the party stopped. The byraktor[1] sat down on a rock and lighted a cigarette; the gendarme, without a word, began to climb a tall cliff that overhung the trail.

[1] [War chief of Shoshi -- [265] Analyst]

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

622 What did it mean? Rexh did not know, and I sat impatiently on the mule, which began nosing through the snow for some bite to eat.

Then overhead the high, keen telephone call rang out, answered by far, thin voices that sounded as though the crystal air itself had been tapped, far away, by a giant finger. Even while the voices called and answered in the sky, silent men began to appear, suddenly, without my having noticed their approach. It was startling to see a strange, turbaned head beside my elbow, to find that between two glances a dignified, half-naked man was sitting on the rock beside the byraktor.

Rexh came and led the mule to a little distance. The figure of the gendarme, against the sky, raised its rifle, and I put my hands over my ears just in time to dull the echo crash. "It is polite to go away for a little distance, Mrs. Lane," said Rexh. "The byraktor has called a council of all chiefs of Shoshi."

[291] In half an hour twenty men surrounded the byraktor. They were all, like the byraktor and his gendarme, in cotton underdrawers, barefooted, and naked above the waist, many of them wearing on their heads only the tiny round white cap that covered their scalplocks. Each of them carried his rifle on a woven strap slung over his shoulder, and all had an arsenal in their sashes. They sat on small rocks, on the snow-filmed ground, in a group about the byraktor's bowlder.

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

PEAKS OF SHALA

We were at the mouth of the highest pass. 000 All around the little open space towered cliffs heavy with snow, only to the east the mountain ranges fell away, one beyond the other, to the just-suggested chasm of the Lumi Shala Valley, and beyond it they rose again, purple and blue and gray, to the foot of the great wave of snow that touched the sky—the wave that Alex and Frances and Perolli were climbing, if they had left Shala. A black cloud hanging over the pass they were to take told that they were traveling in a storm.

The council lasted half an hour, three quarters [622] of an hour, an hour. It concerned grave matters; the earnestness of those intent bodies and keen faces said that. Meantime Rexh and I talked in low tones.

"I am not paying the byraktor a hundred kronen to sit here while he holds a council," said I. "Do you think he intends to get me to Scutari to-night?"

"I do not think so, Mrs. Lane. But if you want to get there, it shall be done. We must consider many things." Rexh used his fingers to check them off. "First, the byraktor must be thinking a great deal about the new Tirana government. You remember that he asked the Shala man about Rrok Perolli. Also he talked a long time with his mother's mother, and that was about politics. Second, the byraktor holds a 622 council. Therefore he is going to do something that concerns the tribe. The byraktor, you

*[See pp. 265-6 [267] -- Analyst]

[§ 22] know, is the war chief; he is the one who leads
ooo the tribe to war. Shoshi is in blood with Shala, and Shala has sworn a *besa* with the Tirana government. We must think of all these things. Now I think that the byraktor is also in blood with some of the tribes along the Kiri River, between here and Scutari. I think that he has hired you the mule so that he can travel in safety with you through those tribes and get to Scutari, where he will inquire about the Tirana government and whether it intends to join Shala in war against Shoshi. That is what I think."

I looked at that twelve-year-old lad in amazement and admiration. "Well, Rexh," I said, humbly, "I must leave it to you to get me to Scutari to-night, somehow. You think the byraktor intends to stop along the way?"

"Yes, Mrs. Lane. Also I think that the Shala man does not want to reach Scutari to-night. He swears earnestly, but I think he is a serpent with a forked tongue."

I sat there on the donkey, appalled. "But, Rexh, you know that I must get to Scutari to-night. Tell them I have said it. I am of the American tribe, and what Americans say they will do, they do. To-night I get to Scutari!"

"Yes, Mrs. Lane. But one must not tell all one thinks. We will say nothing. We will see."

When the council was ended we went on leisurely through the pass, and down into valleys, and up again over other mountains. At two o'clock we left behind the last glimpse of the wall of snow to the east, the last sight of the interior mountains of northern Albania, the most beautiful mountain country in the world. At three o'clock we saw, glimmering on the far-western horizon, the silvery edge of Lake Scutari, and far to the right, deep between two ranges, the valley of the tribe of Pultit, and the white house of the bishop, the tiniest of specks to my eyes; but the Albanians saw it plainly, and distinguished it from any other.

At four o'clock we began the tremendous descent into the Kiri Valley and I was obliged to dismount. "The gendarme says he cannot hold the donkey by the tail here, Mrs. Lane. He is afraid the tail will break."

And for two miles we swung downward bowlder by bowlder, exhausting travel to the arms and shoulders; but the mountain women came up that way with cradles on their backs. The mule made it by little leaps.

"Now the road is good," said the Shala man, and, indeed, the two-foot path, no steeper anywhere than the steep trails on Tamalpais, seemed a boulevard to me. Only twenty miles more to Scutari! And I thought of getting off the clothes in which I had slept for three nights, and a shampoo shone before me like a bright star. Rexh had been borrowing trouble, I thought; there was still light on the western slopes and twenty miles was nothing to these people. And just as I was thinking this the byraktor halted.

600 "We will go this way, now," he said, "to the village where we stay to-night."

Why was it so necessary that I reach Scutari before I slept? I do not know. But the idea had become fixed, an obsession; I was irrational, for the moment a monomaniac. There was nothing I would not have sacrificed to satisfy that imperious desire.

"Tell the byraktor that I must get on to Scutari," I said. "I am sick and must get quickly to a doctor. I cannot stay in any village to-night; I must be with my own people."

"Yes, Mrs. Lane," said Rexh, and, having talked for some time, he explained, "I have told him that you have had word from your father, who is the chief of your tribe, and that the word said you must go to Durazzo and take a boat to your own country."

"Very well. What does he say?"

"He says that you stop in this village to-night. It is a good village, and you will be rested in the morning."

"I will be in Scutari in the morning," I said. "Tell him again that I must go to Scutari. If he cannot go himself, will he let me take the mule?"

"But he says the roads are dangerous and it will be dark."

"Tell him I am American and there is no danger that stops an American."

The byraktor looked at me, puzzled, but with a little humor in the depths of his dark eyes.

He had put on his turban; below its white folds 000
the silver chain dangled on his bare breast; above
it the muzzle of his rifle caught a glint of the
western sunlight.

"He says it is not a question of your safety; 628
it is a question of his honor. I was right, Mrs. 577
Lane; he says that he is in blood with the tribes
through which one goes to Scutari. If he travels
through them by night he will be killed, and in
the darkness no one will know who has done it.
He does not mind being killed, but to be killed
by some one his tribe cannot know and kill afterward would be black dishonor to him. It is true, Mrs. Lane, and he is a great byraktor—the byraktor of five hundred houses."

"But he need not go with me. You and the Shala man will go with me. I only want his mule. Is he afraid for his mule? I will give him a paper, and if I am killed and the mule is stolen he can get another mule from the Red Cross house in Scutari."

I said this quite innocently, but the words taught me what blazing eyes are. One hears of them; one seldom sees them. But the byraktor's eyes seemed actually to kindle into flame, and involuntarily I shrank back when he turned them on me.

"He does not think of the mule, Mrs. Lane. He thinks only of his honor. You must not say such things. He says you cannot go on without him; you are traveling under his protection, and it is his honor that is concerned if anything happens to you."

1/h [Shoshi warchief and author's guide to Scutari -- Analyst]

PEAKS OF SHALA

577 628 I looked at the ring of utterly savage-looking men, half naked, with shaven heads and scalp-locks, surrounding me in those wild mountains, and suddenly I struggled not to laugh. If a magic vision could have shown me then to my friends at home, how they would have prayed that I escape alive, while the real difficulty was that these savages wanted only too embarrassingly to protect me.

"But, Rexh, it is absurd. I did not ask for his protection; I simply hired his mule. Tell him that he has brought me so far safely, so far I have traveled under his protection. I thank him, I thank him deeply, I am most grateful with my whole heart, but now I will leave his protection and travel onward." And to Rexh's words, with my hand on my heart, I added in Albanian, "I thank you from my heart."

The byraktor made a gesture, only a little gesture with his hand, but the violence of its fury I cannot describe. "You thank me! You have broken my honor!" he said, and even without Rexh's murmured translation I would have felt the menace of the silence that followed.

"But," I said, bewildered, "I am traveling with the Shala[1] man. Isn't the Shala man protection? Besides, tell him I don't need protection. I am protected even here by the power of my own tribe."

"The Shala man shall take you in, Mrs. Lane," said Rexh. That too-handsome youth had hung back from the conversation, but Rexh's stern

[1] [Shala tribe is in blood feud [272] with Shoshi tribe -- Analyst]

eye brought him into it. And then there was 577
such a battle of words that the very rocks joined 628
it. The byraktor stood listening, bending down a little, intent; Rexh—short, pudgy Rexh in his flannelette pajamas—drove home with fist on chubby fist his earnest words, and the Shala man called Heaven and the cliffs to witness his clamor. The byraktor turned his eyes from Rexh to the Shala man, from the Shala man to Rexh, and thoughtfully stroked his chin. Around us the other men stood attentive.

Then the Shala man turned and, lifting me from the trail to which I had dismounted, swung me again into the saddle. He pounded the saddle with his fist and exclaimed violently, his face congested with dark blood.

"It is all right, Mrs. Lane," said Rexh, grimly. "He will take you in. He has told the byraktor why he cannot take you to Scutari; it is because the gendarmes are looking for him to kill him. But he will take you in. After that the gendarmes can have him; he is of no use."

Even my fixed idea was shaken by those astounding, calm words.

"But, Rexh," I said, in horror, "I can't kill a man, even to get to Scutari to-night. Do you think the gendarmes will really kill him if he takes me in?" But one glance at the violently miserable Shala man answered the question.

"Yes, Mrs. Lane," said Rexh. "They will kill him by law, because he has killed some men. But, Mrs. Lane, he said he would take you to

577 628 Scutari and he must take you to Scutari. The byraktor will tell you so."

"*Po, po,*" said the byraktor, agreeing, and, "*Po, po,*" said the others; and looking at the Shala man, I had no doubt that if he faltered on the way Rexh's tongue had barbs to drive him onward.

"But explain to the byraktor that it is not American custom—that I can't take a man to be killed, Rexh. I'm sorry," said I, for it did seem a pity to disappoint Rexh so, when he had so nicely arranged everything. I leaned from the saddle and spoke earnestly to the byraktor myself, Rexh's murmured translation for his ears while I held his eyes: "I must get to Scutari to-night. It is necessary. But I do not want to risk any man's life. I take my own life in my hands and go with it on the trail. No one else can carry it for me. That is American custom. It is American custom that I thank you now, and give back to you your protection, and go on alone. If it is not your custom, I am sorry, but by all American custom your honor is safe, and I am American, and Albanian law does not apply to me."

"You speak with a tongue of great learning," said the byraktor, but this time his manner was sympathetic. "However, my honor is my honor, and my protection goes with you all the way to your own tribe. I will go with you to Scutari."

"But I don't want the byraktor to be killed, either!" I wailed; and then the byraktor's

gendarme came forward. He was a low-browed, 577
rascally-looking fellow, a man with bad eyes like 628
those of an untrustworthy horse, and a charming smile. He was naked except for the wide scarlet sash around his loins and the tiny white cap over his scalplock.

"The honor of my byraktor is my honor," he said. "My byraktor is a good byraktor and a great byraktor. He is byraktor of five hundred houses. If he is killed, all the valley mourns. If he is killed in the dark and we never know who killed him so that we can kill that man, that is black dishonor for all the tribe of Shoshi. I am only one man, and if I am killed it does not matter. I will go with you to Scutari."

"Glory to your lips!" said the others. "Good! It is decided."

"Well," I thought, "all this is beautiful 628
rhetoric, but no one will kill him while I am with him." As for the danger in the darkness, I did not believe it for a moment. Who would shoot a person he could not see? So I said good-by to the byraktor—all our long and flowery speeches consumed another quarter of an hour, and the sunlight was climbing away over the mountains so rapidly that we could see it go—and I said good-by to all the others, and promised the frantic Shala man that indeed he should be paid what had been promised; I would send him the money by the gendarme, and I would send the mule and the hundred kronen to the byraktor—and then another difficulty arose. If I left the

628 Shala man unprotected here, in the midst of the Shoshi men who had traveled amiably with him all that day—but he had never wandered beyond eyeshot of me—his life would be no safer than in the hands of the gendarmes of Scutari.

I actually felt despair when Rexh pointed this out. "Well, but he has to get back through the tribe of Shoshi somehow, anyway, hasn't he? Why on earth did he ever start this idiotic trip?"

"He wanted the money, Mrs. Lane, and he cannot think ahead. He came through Shoshi only for a joke. If he can get away alive from these men he can go back through Pultit."

"Well, ask the byraktor if he will give me this Shala man's worthless life. Ask him not to let his men shoot him until after to-morrow night. Ask him if the Shala man may stay safely under the byraktor's protection until the gendarme gets back with his money, and then go in peace."

000 So this was arranged, and the Shala man, turning his beautiful eyes most languishingly to mine, fervently kissed my hands in Italian fashion; and again I said good-by to the byraktor, and at last, just as the last sunlight left the mountains, Rexh, the gendarme, the mule, and I continued our way toward Scutari.

We followed the winding trail along the banks of the Kiri River. Twilight was over the rushing waters and the cliffs; all along the way the trees were misty green with the youngest of new leaves, and the air was very pure and still. It was all peaceful and very beautiful, and, lulled

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

into dreaminess, I leaned back in the wooden saddle, watching the first stars pricking through the sky. The only sounds were the little tinkling of the donkey's steel-plated hoofs upon the rocks, and the pouring, rushing noise of the Kiri. Mile after mile we went, the narrow cañon opening fresh vistas before us at every turn of the trail around the cliffs, and the twilight grew grayer, the stars brighter.

But we were coming down the river, out of the mountains, and a sudden shaft of pale sunlight striking a green hill on the other bank surprised me by announcing that the sun had not yet set on the Scutari plain. It was like coming into a new day. I sat up.

"Tired, Rexh?"

"No, Mrs. Lane."

"But you've been walking twelve hours! Sure you don't want to ride?"

"No, thank you, Mrs. Lane. I am truly not tired."

"I think I'll walk awhile," said I, sliding down from the saddle. Even then he would not ride, but it was good to stretch tired muscles again, and, hand in hand, Rexh and I ran for some time along the almost level, winding trail, splashing through the little streams that crossed it, until suddenly Rexh stopped.

"We must not leave the gendarme behind, Mrs. Lane. Some one will shoot him."

"So they will!" said I. "Well, let's wait for him."

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

PEAKS OF SHALA

000 He overtook us, hurrying the mule with blows, and we fell in behind him, speculating now and then around which turn of the cliffs we would first see the Kiri bridge, that lovely succession of old stone arches, built long ago in the Italian style, and wondering what the girls in the Red Cross house would say when we so unexpectedly arrived.

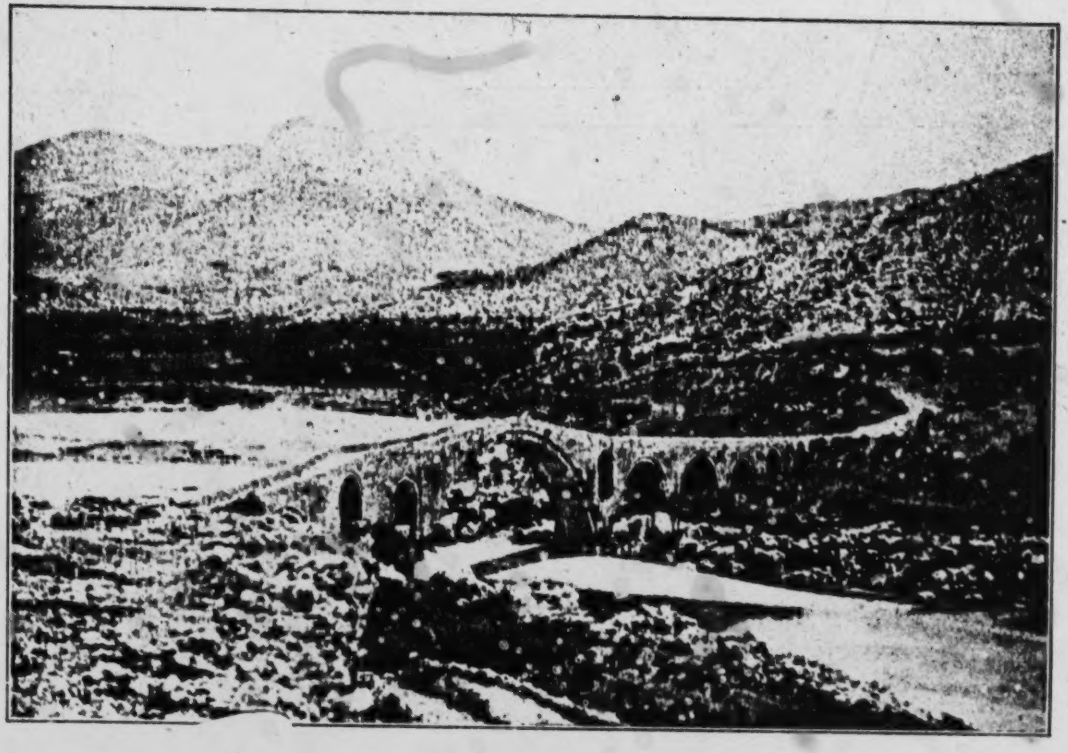
628 The crash of the thing that happened was like an explosion—over before one had time to comprehend it. I happened to be looking toward the gendarme^, a couple of yards ahead of me, walking at the donkey's head; I had just taken my eyes from the creamy blue river and I saw him reach for his rifle. A misty rain was falling; he had thrown my poncho over his shoulders; the strap that held his rifle ran under it. His gesture was quick and desperate, some part of the rifle caught on a rent in the poncho and the heavy oilcloth ripped apart with a loud tearing sound. The broken, frantic, struggling movement was printed on my eyeballs, and then with headlong leaps I had reached him; we stood beside a bowlder that had blocked my view of the trail, and in front of us were two rifles, pointed straight at us.

There were two men behind the rifles, but I swear that I saw only the rifles. I flung out my hand and heard the most fluting feminine voice I have ever commanded crying, "Long life to you!" And then the rifles fired.

I have tried to give the effect of the thing as

^ [of Shoshi tribe accom[278]panying author to Scutar
--Analyst]

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGI Albania EGI



THE KIRI BRIDGE

133
491

278a

628 it happened; I may now say at once that I was not killed, though I shouldn't have been at all surprised if I had next realized that I was dead. Instead, I saw two very haughty and displeased Albanians advancing up the trail. "And to you long life!" they said, stiffly, and turned their heads from the gendarme as they passed him. When they were quite gone I was startled to find myself in a heap on the trail, weeping aloud like a six-year-old. It's odd how such things take you; I suppose it was the surprise of it.

The gendarme did not seem unduly excited. He said he had killed the cousin of one of those men not long before, and had been a little afraid of meeting him on this road. He said they had lifted their rifles when they saw me, and the bullets had gone over our heads. He said that from now on, if I did not mind, he would wear my hat as a disguise, because there were more of that man's relatives about. And would I mind walking beside him until we passed the Kiri bridge? He would then be out of the dangerous territory. As for my poncho, he was very sorry that he had torn it. I assured him that it did not matter.

000 I walked beside him all the way to the Kiri bridge, and then got on the wooden saddle again and leaned back and rested. There was still an hour of traveling across the Scutari plain.

The sunlight faded from the silvering western sky, the western mountains were low dark shapes blotting out the stars. Far away a light twinkled on the citadel of Scutari. For a long time it was the only light in a vast darkness, and then the moon rose slowly above the snow peaks of the eastern mountains. The sky was the pale blue of a turquoise, flooded with creamy light, the lake of Scutari was a silver glimmer, like quicksilver spilled far out on the plain. All around us the tall spikes of yucca blossoms stood vaguely creamy in the moonlight. We traveled over the silent land like silent ghosts, our shadows wavering uncertainly beside us.

The donkey walked with little, quick, indefatigable steps; the gendarme swung along easily, his rifle on his back; Rexh trudged beside me with his hand on the saddle. The soft earth let us pass without a sound.

"Tired, Rexh?"

"No, Mrs. Lane."

"What is the matter?"

"I am thinking that you will go away to your own country and forget us. You say you will come back to Albania, but you never will. It is easy to forget when one is far away; the mind changes. A mind is like the water in a river. We will forget you, too. But I would like to keep this night, because it is a very beautiful night."

"Yes, Rexh, so would I."

The lights of Scutari were like scattered glowworms among the trees. How strange it would be to come back into the twentieth century again! Scutari, Tirana, Salonica—Constantinople? No, not Constantinople. I would go back to Paris. It was not so much that I was tired of traveling as that I was filled with it. One must go across the centuries and back, across a great deal of the world and back, perhaps, to know all the strange things that are at home, all the romances and surprises in one's own self.

The lights of Scutari were coming nearer. Scutari, Tirana, Durazzo, the Adriatic, Trieste, and Venice, and then Paris—perhaps ten days to Paris, the center of all Europe's intrigues. For a weary instant I felt again the pressure of all those currents which bewilder, crush, and smother the struggling individual—movements of peoples, marching of armies, alliances of nations, the tides of poverty and disease, the tremendous impersonal economic conflicts. Silicia's coal, Galicia's oil, England's unemployed millions, Ireland, Egypt, India—my mind slid away from them all. I was too pleasantly tired, too much under the spell of the Albanian moon—perhaps, now, a little too old—to care tremendously again for movements. They seemed at once too inevitable and too unpredictable to be concerned about.

The three of us were so small on that vast plain, the sweep of the moon-filled sky and the bulk of the blue-black mountains were too vast; simple as an Albanian, I thought of the world as made of little individuals like ourselves, each lonely, surrounded by the unknown, each a little world in himself. That little world was the real world. Externals did not matter. If each of us could only make our own little world clean and kind and peaceful——

"Tired, Mrs. Lane?" Rexh said, softly.

"No, Rexh. Just thinking."

"Slowly, slowly, little by little," said the byraktor's gendarme.

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

POSTSCRIPT ooo

283

6c: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

POSTSCRIPT

IN WHICH IS RELATED WHAT MAY BE FOUND BEHIND THE CURTAIN OF SILENCE WHICH HIDES ALBANIA, ALSO HOW THE MEN OF DIBRA CAME WITH THEIR RIFLES TO TIRANA, AND HOW AHMET, THE HAWK, CHIEF OF THE MATI AND PRESENT PRIME MINISTER OF ALBANIA, SAVED THE BALKAN EQUILIBRIUM.

FOR me, there has been a sequel to this tale of my first adventures in the Albanian mountains. And if I have transmitted, through the little clickings of my typewriter, something of the interest and charm those adventures had for me, perhaps there will be interest in the few additional things I have learned about the Albanians.

Just a year from the day on which I parted with the byraktor of Shoshi, I came with a friend, Annette Marquis, down the Adriatic on a Lloyd-Triestino boat to Durazzo. As always, a flock of little boats came out to meet the steamer. Dingy, unpainted, rowed by villainous-looking, swarthy men in rags, they seemed indeed the emissaries of a nation of brigands. The nice girl from Boston, who was traveling from Venice to Athens chaperoned by two aunts, looked at us with horrified eyes.

[284 is blank]

POSTSCRIPT

000 "You aren't really going into Albania—all alone?" she gasped. "Why—won't you be killed?" The shipload of passengers crowded the rail to watch us descend the swaying ladder, and gazed as the safe crowd watches the lion tamer, divided between admiration for daring and contempt for such senseless waste of courage. The weight of this mass opinion swayed even my friend, who said, nervously, as we went bobbing across waves of green water: "I wish I hadn't listened to you in Budapest. I wish I'd brought the gun they told us to bring."

"Nonsense!" I said, firmly—and would have believed no fortune teller who had told me I was lying—"we'll be safer in Albania than in New York." And with irrational, vicarious pride I pointed out to her the many masts of sunken ships around us—remains of Austrian and Italian cruisers impartially sunk by Albanians during the Great War.

361 As the boat came nearer to the yellow walls of Durazzo I gazed with complacency on the ruins of the palace of the Prince of Wied, the German king forced on Albania by the European Powers just before the Powers themselves leaped at one another's throats. In 1914 the Albanians rose and drove him out with their rifles; his palace is a ruin now, and the palace grounds are a public park. But all Durazzo is built upon ruins, for it was an ancient city when the Romans built the towers and walls that still surround it, and there are still cafés on the sites of the cafés where

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

POSTSCRIPT

Cicero sat with parchment and stylus, writing 361
home to Rome for money to pay his way back—because, as he admitted with some chagrin, he had wasted all his substance in that merry and wicked city. Even for Cicero Durazzo had, in addition to its living charms, the flavor of antiquity, for the Roman city was built on the ruins of the older Albanian seaport.

A year earlier there had been no automobiles in Albania, but now, to our surprise, we found a valiant small Ford waiting at the pier, and engaged it at once to take us to Tirana, forty miles away. Our baggage was a problem until [609]
the chauffeur of a government truck, addressing us in French, volunteered on his own responsibility to take it to the capital for us. "Pay? *Mais, non!*" said he, hurt. "You are Americans, and the stranger in Albania is our guest."

The road from Durazzo to Tirana crossed the 491
low mountains that, from Trieste to Valona, make the endless monotonous eastern wall of the Adriatic. When you come over the crest of them you see lying before you the green low central valley and the farther blue peaks of the lands of the hidden tribes. And everything accustomed, 492
everything commonplace, everything that reflects ourselves to us, is left behind. Gray water buffalo, flat-nosed, curly-horned, monstrous beasts that seem risen from depths of primeval slime, plod down the road drawing high, narrow wagons of wickerwork on huge wooden wheels. Shaggy, small donkeys carry picturesque folk down the

POSTSCRIPT

[492] winding road to Shijak, the village by the river
491 where the bridge begins and ends in willow groves.

Beyond Shijak the road goes over the last low [133] hill, and twenty miles of plain lie before it, most sparsely dotted with the great white houses of the beys of central Albania. Against the eastern sky the towering mountains, with their eternal smoke of clouds, catch the last rays of the sun and make magic with it. For an hour the colors shift and change, plum purple, orange gold, mauve and violet and sea green, until at last only a pale gold moon and a silvery star shine in a lemon-yellow sky. And the seven white minarets of Tirana lift above the green of trees.

342 Dusk was on the plain, and lights were glimmering through little houses here and there, when we came to Tirana. No, the lights do not glimmer through windows; these houses of peasants on the great estates have no windows, as they have no chimneys. The light of the evening fire, built on the earthen floor, shines through walls woven of willow withes, and the smoke seeps through thatched roofs.

373 Before us twinkled the street lamps of Tirana. These are literally lamps, filled every day with kerosene and set on their poles, to be lighted with a match after the evening call to prayer from the minarets. Our little car passed between low, ghostly white walls, and stopped before the gendarmerie. An officer came out, lifted one of the street lamps from its pole and held it over the car door, the better to see us.

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

POSTSCRIPT

"Long may you live, *zonyas!*" said he, and, 000 after he had glanced at our passports: "All honor to you. Go on a smooth trail!" And the words rekindled an old hearth fire in my heart. After a year of the bleakness of Europe, I was at home again.

Three days later rifles were crackling, machine guns were ripping out their staccato shots, and we were under fire in the streets of Tirana. It was the rebellion of March, 1922—a strange affair, which I am about to relate. But before it can be understood, Albania itself must be understood, for that crisis and its outcome are incomprehensible, incredible, without their background.

It would be useless, even though it were not 114 dishonest, to claim that I see Albania with impartial eyes. But this should be said: if I feel a fondness for the little country which perhaps obscures clear judgment, that fondness was created by knowing Albania. I came into it, as I have said, rather prejudiced against it than otherwise. I did not intend to stop there; I was persuaded to stay two weeks; and I have twice returned to Albania and will go there again.

Yes, I have become a special pleader for Albania. But I know the country, I speak the language, I have traveled along the northwestern frontier from Lake Scutari to the Dibra, I have spent months with the people of tribes never before visited by a foreigner. And I have yet to read in any American publication a reference to

POSTSCRIPT

114 Albania which is accurate. When a writer so well informed as Mr. Lathrop Stoddard refers to Albania as a "land of rugged mountains and equally rugged mountaineers which raises nothing but trouble," and thinks that its importance in the Balkan problem is due to Italy's exaggeration of Valona's military importance; when all American consuls in Europe warn travelers not to go to Albania, a land of brigands; when Albania appears in the newspapers only as a joke or as the scene of another lawless revolution—the few Americans who know Albania do become special pleaders.

000 There are good reasons for these misconceptions of Albania. For six centuries the Albanians were one of the buried Christian minorities of the Turkish Empire in Europe. Their great men who rose to places of power in the Near East were not known to the outside world as Albanians. Ismail Kemal Bey, Grand Vizier of Turkey, who raised the flag of Albanian independence in 1912; Mehmet Ali, who led the struggle for Egyptian independence in 1811 and founded the dynasty of the Khedives of Egypt; Crispi, the great Italian statesman—these are a few of the Albanians who, having lost their own country, have fought under other banners. When the Albanians of Sicily rose behind Garibaldi and fought for a free and united Italy, they were thought to be Italians. When the Albanians of Epirus fought for the freedom of Greece, they were thought to be Greek. When they fight for the

freedom of Turkey, they are thought to be 000
Turks. And—this is of greater importance—
when the Albanians rose to fight for the freedom
of Albania, they fought behind a curtain
of impenetrable silence.

They were surrounded by a battle line. The 648
Slavs were north and east; the Greeks were
south; the Italians were west. Albania was cut
off from the outside world in 1910; for thirteen
years she has been cut off from the world. No
telegraph or telephone lines ran from Albania to
Europe; no mail got through without censorship,
no traveler without passport visé from
enemies. Letters for Europe must still go by
messenger through Jugo-Slavia, or by Italian
steamer to Italian ports. During May and June,
1922, while I was in Tirana, Albania's communi- 7
cation with Europe was completely closed by the
Italians, in retaliation for Albania's protest
against the establishing of Italian post offices in
Albanian cities.

Behind this veil of silence, the truth about 000
Albania lies hidden. Only one newspaper correspondent, to my knowledge, has visited Albania in recent years—Mr. Maurer of the Chicago *Post.* Mr. Kenneth Roberts of the *Saturday Evening Post* lay for ten days ill in Tirana, left with all haste for Montenegro, and later wrote of Albania—entertainingly. News of Albania bears the date lines of Belgrade, Rome, Athens. Since 1910 it has been as accurate as news of France bearing a Berlin date line. This is only

POSTSCRIPT

000 human, for few of us are accurately just to our enemies, and the Hungarian, Austrian, Serbian, Italian, and Greek soldiers who have campaigned in Albania have returned to describe the country as hell with variations. The one European who has spoken to me of the Albanians without horror is a doctor in Budapest. He had worked in Serbia during the war, and there had encountered a terribly wounded Albanian still alive on a battlefield. The doctor bent over him to examine his wounds, and the Albanian bit off the doctor's little finger.

"I cannot think of that man without admiration," said the doctor, looking thoughtfully at his mutilated hand. "I can't blame him for this; I had not spoken to him, and he thought I was an enemy. He was a splendid fellow—stood the most frightful agony without a murmur, and kept his spirit like a lion. I did what I could for him—had no hope of saving him—and that night, wounded as he was, he got away. I hope he reached home alive. Some day I'm going to see Albania."

795 I spoke of Albanians as a Christian minority in the old Turkish Empire. One of the most frequent errors about Albania is the belief that it is Mohammedan; this report has been used for political propaganda. The Albanians became Christians before the Roman conquest, and were Christians when they were subjugated by Turkey. They remained Christian without exception until after the death of George Kastriotes—

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

POSTSCRIPT

known in European history by his Turkish name 795
of Iskander Bey Scanderbeg—who successfully revolted against Turkey and maintained Albanian independence for twenty-five years, defeating the Turks in thirteen great battles and innumerable small ones. After his death in 1467 [797]
some of the chiefs of the central mountain tribes, exhausted by a quarter century of war and confronting fresh Turkish armies, purchased their actual independence by a verbal submission and became nominally Mohammedan. When the Bechtaski sect—which may roughly be said to bear the relation to Islam that the Methodist bears to the Church of Rome—rose in Turkey, it found its most fertile ground among these Mohammedan Albanians. The northern mountain tribes have always remained Roman Catholic, and southern Albania Greek Catholic.

None of these creeds,* however, have affected 771
national unity—Albania is the only Balkan 184
country in which religion and nationality are not synonymous—and all of them are rooted shallowly above the old religion of Albanians, which is the formless belief in a Great Unknown from which sprang the gods and mythology of ancient Greece. In southern Albania you will still hear the people taking oath *per kete djelle eghe per kete hene* (by the power of the sun and the moon). You will still hear them calling upon Zeus—Zaa or Zee, the Voice—and upon Athena—E Thana, The Intelligence. In the north, the Catholic mountaineer greets the rising sun with the sign

*[See cat. 795, pp. [293] 292-293 --Analyst]

POSTSCRIPT

771 of the cross, and hears in his forests the voices
184 of the ora. This vague religion is unconscious. The Albanian himself does not recognize it, but it is the resisting subsoil which has prevented
[582] acknowledged religions from taking deep root. Families of all religions freely intermarry;
[292] Mohammedan women are unveiled, or Catholic women veiled, according to the fashion of their town; in the mountains neither are veiled. In Guri-Bardhe, a village of the Mati known as being fanatically Mohammedan, the women were quite willing to pose for photographs, and Limoni, the chief, was defying the local *hodji* by demanding a modern school; the *hodji* taught the children nothing worth while, he said. In the spring
[798] religious festivals—the two Easters and the fast of Ramazan—all Albanians in Tirana took part, and Mohammedan fezzes were thick in the midnight processions carrying Easter candles.

[186] There has never been friction along the frontiers of the three religions. All Albanians united to resist the Romanizing and Germanizing influence of Catholicism, the attempt of Shiek ul Islam to cripple the Albanian language by a Turkish alphabet (a revolution was fought, and won, for the Latin alphabet in 1910), and the Hellenizing propaganda of certain Orthodox Churchmen.

184 But there is a real division in Albania. It lies
578 between the Toshks, or southerners, and the Ghegs, who are the mountaineers. Men who have held their mountain fastnesses and main-

tained their independence for six centuries within 184 the Turkish Empire look with distrust and contempt 578 on the Toshks whose valleys have been flooded by every wave of invaders. The Toshks, who are the educated men of Albania, and the travelers, are equally contemptuous of the Ghegs, ignorant men unable to read or write. Nor do the Toshks admit that they cannot fight as well as the Ghegs. It was the Toshks in Sicily who fought with Garibaldi, the Toshks of Egypt who fought with Mehmet Ali; the Albanian soldiers in Russia and Rumania and Turkey are Toshk; the 50,000 Albanians in the United States are Toshk, and fought well with the Americans in France. Hundreds of them have returned to spread American ideas through the south; there are Toshk villages in which American English is spoken by nearly every child. Men from these villagers led the forces that drove the Italians from Valona in 1920. Indeed, say the Toshks, they can fight as well as Ghegs. But it is not fighting that Albania needs.

One of the errors about Albania, to which I 133 fear my descriptions may contribute is the belief that the country is entirely mountainous. This is true of the northern part, adjoining Montenegro. Farther south the ranges are like the partitions in a house; steep, high, almost impassable, they surround valleys and plateaus of rich level land, much of it irrigated. The 132 climate of the valleys is semitropical; rice, cotton, 241 tobacco, citrus fruits, figs, and pomegranates

POSTSCRIPT

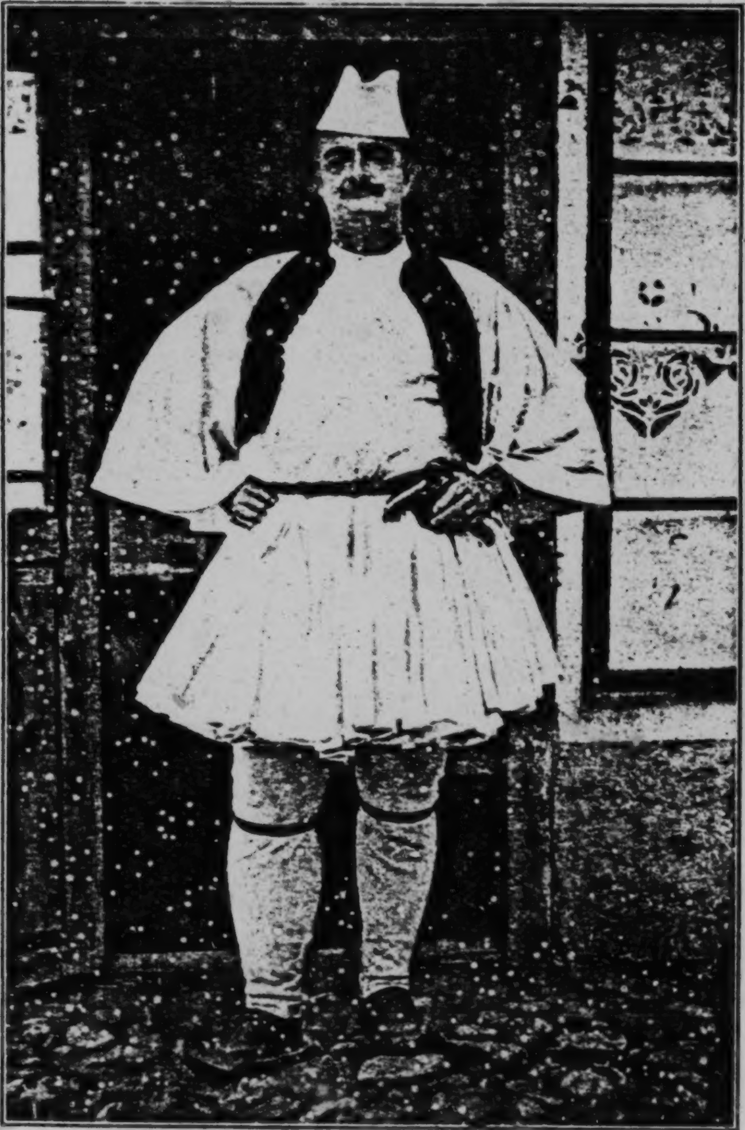
241 flourish. The southern plains, before the war,
439 exported fine horses in considerable numbers.
Properly developed, Albania would be a rich
agricultural country, even without the fertile
valleys of Kossova and Epirus.

135 The mineral resources of Albania are unknown.
During the Austrian occupation, a survey was
made, looking toward the development of copper
mines during the war; the results of the survey
have vanished into the archives of the Austrian
War Department. However, even the untrained
eye perceives that there are copper and lead in the
mountains. English mining engineers have told
me that there are probably also silver and gold.
I have seen veins of coal projecting on mountain
sides; the mountaineers chip it off with hatchets
or pry it loose with levers, and use it as fuel to a
[137] small extent. There are millions of feet of pine,
oak, birch, and beech timber; unlimited water
[315] power. There are oil fields near Valona; producing
oil wells were sunk, and later destroyed,
by the Italians. Valona's military importance
is not the only reason that Albanians are not left
in peace.

175 There is also the political background. For
twenty centuries the Albanians have been a
beleaguered remnant of the first Aryan race in
Europe. By character, temperament, and choice
they belong with the peoples of the west, not with
their Slav neighbors in the Balkans. But they
have had no friends, either in west or east; their
whole history has been a struggle for existence.

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

291



A TOSHK
In his native costume of southern Albania.

296 a

POSTSCRIPT

175 They were never entirely subjugated by Rome; they were not destroyed or assimilated by the Slavs who have been pushing them southward for sixteen hundred years; they never ceased their resistance to Turkey. Since 169 B.C., when the Romans drove them into the mountains, they have been fighting for a free Albania, and giving the Balkans no peace.

They fight with rifles and with diplomacy. They have had no friends, but they profit by the quarrels of their enemies. Wherever there was a weak place in Asia Minor or Central Europe, there the Albanians have tried to strike a blow for Albania. The opportunity of their hero, Scanderbeg, came in the fifteenth century, when the Sultan of Turkey was killed on the battlefield he had won in Kossova. Scanderbeg, whose childhood and youth had been spent in the Sultan's court, was left second in command of the Sultan's victorious forces. He profited by the confusion attending the Sultan's death to get an order giving him command of the fortress of Kruja, built by his father on a mountain overlooking Tirana. The song says that he killed seven horses in reaching Kruja, leaving his escort far behind in the Mati mountains. When he reached the fortress, he at once proclaimed Albanian freedom, and maintained it for twenty-five years of warfare, during which he built citadels and roads and established laws which still exist. After his death, his people waited four hundred years for another chance to strike.

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

POSTSCRIPT

175 Then the Young Turk movement rose. Albanians seized upon it, precipitated the revolution at Uskub in Kossova, and were the deciding factor in terrifying the Sultan and winning the Constitution which promised to respect the languages and laws of subject peoples in Turkey. When these promises were broken, when Montenegro and Serbia invaded Albania, the chiefs raised the flag of Scanderbeg and wrote their own Constitution of Lushnija. The Six Powers, in an effort to maintain the Balkan equilibrium, gave Albania a German king. As soon as the Powers were engaged in the Great War, Albania drove him out. During the war she impartially fought both sides whenever they invaded Albanian territory. When the war ended, when Jugo-Slavia replaced Austria as Italy's rival on the Adriatic, and England and France quarreled, Albania played a shrewd game at Versailles and Geneva and became officially an independent republic.

175 727 Still blockaded after ten years of war and blockade, still fighting invaders in the Mati and the Dibra, she became an independent republic. Her people, from Hoti and Gruda to Corfu, from the Merdite to the Adriatic, were refugees. Her flocks had been killed, her villages burned, her orchards hacked down, her irrigation systems destroyed. She had a provisional government, hardly strong enough to hold itself together. She could not have a permanent government until her boundaries were fixed by the League of Nations.

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

POSTSCRIPT

She had great natural wealth and no debts, 175
but she had no currency of her own, no banks, 727
no credit system. She had hides, wool, and olive oil to export, but all her frontiers were closed by enemies. She had minerals, forests, water power, oil, harbors, but no machines of any kind, no trained men, no commercial organization. She had the strongest men, the bravest fighters, the most indomitable national spirit in Europe, but few of her people could read or write. Certainly more than half the population was ill from malnutrition and malaria, and she had probably the highest infantile mortality rate in Europe.

This was the new Albania which must somehow maintain itself. And if the curtain of silence behind which this Balkan drama is played were a stone wall shutting out her neighbors, the situation would not be so difficult. But Italy—promised southern Albania by the secret Treaty of London in 1915 which induced her to join the Allies against Germany, and cheated of her payment—has authority from the League of Nations to occupy Albania again if the Albanians fail to maintain a stable government. Serbia is still intriguing to push farther south and west the boundary lines not yet entirely fixed by the League of Nations.

There were other difficulties. Because the 175
Toshks are the Albanians who can read and 727
write, the weak provisional government[1] was 578
Toshk. Around the fires in their mountain houses, the Ghegs were saying that only cow-

1[After World War I--Analyst]
2[

POSTSCRIPT

175 ardly Toshks would allow free Albania to bow
727 to a League of Nations—a League of the very
578 Powers who were her enemies. The Ghegs, they said, were no such shameful trucklers. And every fire had its refugee guests who had fled from burning villages, leaving terror and death behind them. These refugees cried to their brother Ghegs for vengeance. Did the Ghegs call themselves men and Albanians? they demanded. "Our teeth in the throats of the Serbs!" the Ghegs replied.

Meanwhile in Tirana the Toshks were talking softly of patience, and of more patience, of waiting month after month for a commission and yet another commission from the League of Nations. The Toshks—with that threat of Italian invasion over them—were demanding peace, peace at any cost. Albania must wait for the League of Nations to fix the boundaries, must acquiesce in any boundaries fixed, must be quiet, must wait.

While they waited, the people starved. Prices in Albania are higher than in the United States—higher in dollars. The homespun garments have worn out; there is nothing to replace them. Fields have been devastated, and no men left alive to till them. Flocks have disappeared, horses and mules are gone. And as the boundaries have been fixed, mile by mile upon a map, Dibra and Mati have lost their market cities, Dukaghini and Merdite have lost their grazing lands, the tribes of Hoti and Gruda and Castrati have been cut in two. Still, the Albanian gov-

ernment spoke of peace, demanded peace, and— 175
determined to have peace—set about disarming 727
the Ghegs in the very face of their enemies. 578

This was the Albania into whose capital I 000
blithely rode, in the rattling little Ford, on that spring night of 1922. I pass over all the minor political disputes, the ambitions of selfish men, the mistakes of foolish ones, the bitter rivalry between Elbassan, to the south, Scutari, to the north, and Tirana, in the center, for the honor and profit of being Albania's capital. Tirana 361
was, tentatively, the capital; made so because it was everywhere conceded to be the least progressive, the most hopelessly Mohammedan, the most dangerously un-Albanian city in the country. The government had made Tirana the capital for the same reason that the teacher puts the worst boy of the class in the front seat. But this was no solace to Scutari or Elbassan.

Tirana, the white, low town, drowsed in the sun;* water rippled in the gutters of the winding, walled streets; donkeys laden with cedar boughs, the brooms of Tirana, carefully picked their footing on the uneven cobbles; women with gayly painted cradles on their backs trudged behind the donkeys. Men in rags of their homespun white garments and Scanderbeg jackets and colored sashes sat all day on the low walls around the mosques. The fez makers, amid their piles of raw wool and mixing bowls and heating irons, were talking politics, and so were the men in the street of the coppersmiths, which is musical from

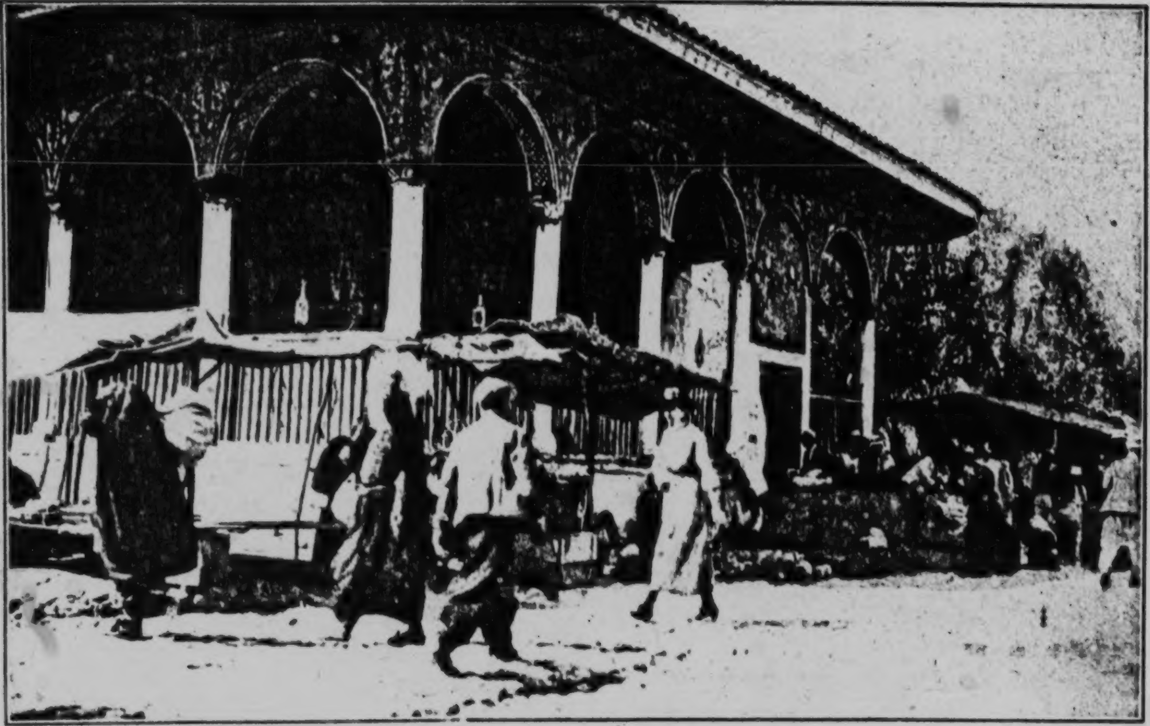
*[In spring 1922 -- Analyst]

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

36 day to sunset with the sound of little hammers beating glowing sheets of metal. At noon the *hodjis* droned their long prayers to Allah from the minarets. At sunset their voices wailed again, above the sound of clattering hoofs and tinkling bells as the flocks came home to the courtyards. Then the sunset left a yellow sky behind the dark blue mountains. The air was so still that the bells of a mule train, winding down to Tirana on the far-off foothill trails, chimed with the sound of running water in the gutters beside the courtyards' mud-brick walls. And the Cabinet Ministers of Albania came out to walk.

They walked in a row, sedately, hands behind their backs, and after them marched their escort, a single row of soldiers. They walked down from Government House, the square two-storied building behind a half-ruined wall; they walked past the Tirana Vocational School and, turning in front of the painted mosque, by the two Cypresses of the Dead, they went past the block of little shops that is Main Street, past the cemetery filled with toppling turbaned stones, past the large white barracks where soldiers sang of Lec i Madhe, and out on the Durazzo road. Then they came slowly back, and slowly went out again. With them on this same way walked all the men of Tirana, for this is the custom at the sunset hour. And we walked, too, saying at intervals: "Long may you live! Long may you live!"

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGI Albania EGI



THE PAINTED MOSQUE IN TIRANA, AND THE LOW WALL ON WHICH, ALL DAY LONG, MEN SIT AND DISCUSS POLITICS

302 a

346

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

POSTSCRIPT

000

It was on the second evening of our walking that, counting Their Excellencies as they came toward us, I said: "Where is the other one? Who is he?" For we had met them all except the Minister of the Interior, and suddenly I realized that he was unknown to us. And Rrok Perolli, who, strangely, was no longer with the government, nor talking much of politics, but living quietly upon an inherited income in Tirana, replied, "He is Ahmet Bey Mati."

The name awakened a thin, faint echo in my mind, an echo mixed with a remembered sound of rain. But, "Long may you live!" I said to Their Excellencies, and for a moment we stood talking in French.

"The disarming is going well in the mountains, Your Excellency?"

"Very well, very well. No trouble at all. *Tout est tranquil, madame.*"

I did not believe this, knowing that to a Gheg his rifle was his honor, and either dearer than life. But there is a convention which exempts the words of statesmen from measurement by the Decalogue.

"Then we can soon be starting for the mountains?"

"Certainly, certainly, madame. As soon as we can find proper guides and horses for you."

We thanked them and, refusing a coffee, walked slowly on in the summer evening. Nothing could have been more tranquil than the low white town, with its cobbled winding streets, its stream murmuring beneath a stone bridge, its minarets, its plane trees. The crowds went slowly up and down, sauntering past the mosque's naïvely pictured walls, past the white-arcaded street of little shops whose owners sat crosslegged among their goods, past the cemetery of toppling turbaned gravestones, past the lighted windows of the cafés where men were singing the strange Albanian melodies. It is a town to be happy in, Tirana.

But the water rippling in the gutters stirred uneasiness in my mind, a vague uneasy effort, out of which came a name. "Ahmet Bey Mati! What have I heard about him, Rexh?"

"I don't know all you can have heard about him, Mrs. Lane. But you remember the *comitadj*, in the cave above the Lumi Shala on the trail from Thethis? The one that sang us the songs? He told you first about Ahmet Bey and how they went to Valona."

"Oh, Rexh, sure enough! Doesn't it seem a long time ago? And how you have grown, and how much you have learned, since then!"

For the little boy who trudged beside the donkey through that moonlit night on the plains of Scutari was gone. The red fez, the flannelette pajamas, were memories. It was a youth with a quick smile and earnest eyes who walked beside me in Tirana, a student in the Vocational School, learned in baseball and college yells and geometry, modest still, and thinking more than he spoke, but no longer a child. It was Frances—now in

France—who had got Rexh into the American school, handicapped though he was with lack of schooling and with his Gheg tongue, and he had worked hard to justify her commendation.

"I do my best, Mrs. Lane. At first I was very stupid, for I could not understand the Toshk boys, and I could not understand the teachers when they asked me questions, and I was two years behind with the books. But now they speak English, and I have learned Toshk. So I am happy, and my report card is very good. I would like to show you my next one. Now that you have come, I have some one to show it to. It is a joke on me, because, though you said you would come back, I did not think you ever would. And aren't you happy to find the school really here?"

For we had talked a great deal about the school, a year before when it was only a plan and a hope. Of all the work done by American children in Europe, this school is most beautiful to me. It was not much the Junior Red Cross did in Albania—only a few months of Frances Hardy's house for refugee children in Scutari, only a little medical work that stopped too soon —but it did build the Vocational School, and Albania will never forget it. Half of the country's little income goes for the 1,100 schools started since 1912, but none of them can be equipped or staffed like the Vocational School. It opened in July, with sixty boys to learn English. For there are no technical books writ-

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

871 ten in Albanian, and Albanian was the only language the boys knew. Three months later they were speaking, reading, and writing English, and 000 the first school year began. In March, when we came to Tirana, they were the finest upstanding lot of youngsters that ever made a teacher proud, and our arrival was celebrated by an evening's entertainment, for which the boys extemporized little plays in English, political parodies so witty that they brought tears of mirth to the eyes. I do not think the record of those boys is equaled anywhere, and to find Rexh among them was the happy ending to the story.

643 "And now, Ahmet Bey is Minister of the Interior! Who is chief of the Mati, then?"

"His mother is chief when he is away, Mrs. Lane."

"Is he a good Minister of the Interior?"

"He works very hard. I think he did not have much schooling. He came from the court of Abdul Hamid when he was sixteen—you remember the *comitadj* told you—and he has been fighting ever since. He came to Tirana last December, when there was the strike."

"No, Rexh! A strike? In Tirana?"

"It is a long story, Mrs. Lane. If you would have a coffee with me, I would tell it all."

We left the others wandering down the Durazzo road and back, and sat at a little table beneath a plane tree by the white arches of the café. A waiter brought us cups of Turkish coffee, and while the crowd went slowly past us

*[march 1922 --Analyst
2 F 1922 Analyst]

and bursts of Albanian song came through the open windows and a great yellow moon rose behind the white minaret, Rexh told the tale of the first strike in Albanian history.

"It was at the time of the Merdite trouble. I do not know what you have heard of the Republic of the Merdite; it was a Serbian plan to get the Merdite country. The people were starving, and the Serbs promised them corn, and I think there was money for the Merdite chiefs, because some of them signed a paper that said there was a Republic of the Merdite and the Serbs sent that paper to Europe. Then other chiefs fought these chiefs that signed it, and the Serbs came in, and Ahmet Bey Mati was sent with our soldiers to fight the Serbs. It is five days to the Merdite, when the trails are good. 693

"You know, Mrs. Lane, Albania has no king. We have four regents, that we call quarter-kings. We laugh when we say it. 'There goes a quarter-king,' we say. There are the Ministers elected by Parliament, and their chief, the Prime Minister; they are the real kings. They do things, and then afterward the quarter-kings have to say, 'Yes, that is what we would have done.'

"While Ahmet Bey was gone to the Merdite with all our soldiers, there were only three quarter-kings in Tirana. One was gone to Geneva; he was a good one. One that was here was a good one. One was a friend of Castoldi, the Italian. No good Albanian, Mrs. Lane, is a friend of Italy. And the last 000

[1922 --Analyst]

quarter-king, he was from Dibra, and wanted to fight the Serbs.

"And while there were no soldiers here, secretly at midnight thirty men with rifles came into Tirana, and went to the house of Pandeli Evangeli, the Prime Minister. They went in over the walls and through the windows. They pointed their rifles at Pandeli and said, 'Resign.' So he resigned. Then he called for a horse and went home to Valona.

"In the morning there was no Prime Minister. And Parliament was not in session. Do you understand, Mrs. Lane?"

I understood. Thus easily—if surmise could be believed—Italy had captured the Albanian government. Two of the three quarter-kings controlled the situation, and one of them was a Gheg. If he were given his head, Italy had only to await the outbreak of violence between the chiefs who wanted war on Serbia and those who were clamoring for peace, and then march in with her authority from the League of Nations to bring law and order into lawless Albania. "What happened, Rexh?"

"But you have guessed it. The one good quarter-king could do nothing, and resigned. The other two made a government to fight Serbia. Hassan Prishtini of Kossova was the new Prime Minister. Then all Albania was like a nest of hornets stirred with a stick. The men of Parliament went riding from their villages to Elbassan, and Prishtini sent word to Elbassan

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

POSTSCRIPT

to kill them. Then all the men of Korcha went with rifles to Elbassan to fight for Parliament. Troops with machine guns were coming from Scutari to fight Prishtini. And, Mrs. Lane, there was an Italian gunboat at Durazzo. Everywhere all men, Toshks and Ghegs, were saying, what could they do to save the Constitution? But no one knew how to do it.

"Hassan Prishtini said, 'The Constitution does not make Albania free; we will make Albania really free. Albanians are not cowards and will not be ruled by cowards,' Hassan Prishtini said. 'We have nothing to do with Leagues of Nations that have sold us. We will fight the Serbs and make Kossova free; we will take back our lands of Hoti and Gruda and Castrati. The Italians do not dare touch us. We drove them once from Valona; we can do it twice.' That was what Hassan Prishtini said.

"'I think this will be a good year for pears,' said the bear. 'Why?' said the other bear. And the first bear replied, 'Because I like them.'

"I forgot, Mrs. Lane, that people do not talk that way in English. I forgot I was not talking in Albanian. In English you would say it: Hassan Prishtini thought that he could do what he wanted to do because he wanted to do it. But that is not thinking.

"That very first morning, there was the strike. The two men that can make the telephone work, and the man that clicks the telegraph, and the chauffeur of the government automobile, and the

[December 1921 [309] -- Analyst]

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

cook and the coffee maker of Government House, and the guard at the door, and all the secretaries of all the Ministers—they all went to the Café International, and had a meeting. Then they walked from the café to Government House and back, singing the song of free Albania. After that they did nothing. They sat and drank coffee. I do not know if you have ever seen a strike, but that is what it is. They did not do anything, and there was no telephone, no telegraph, no messenger, no coffee, nothing at all, for the new government.

"And Hassan Prishtini could not do anything. The new government sat in Government House. Everybody else sat in the cafés. Elbassan did not fight Parliament, because it could not get Tirana on the telephone. Hassan Prishtini's men in the mountains did not march anywhere, because no orders came. All Albania thought something terrible was happening in Tirana, and wasn't it funny? Because nothing at all was happening.

"On the third day, Ahmet Bey came with twelve hundred fighting men of the Mati—Catholics, from northern Mati. They came in, and they did not do anything. But there were no other fighting men in Tirana. So Hassan Prishtini resigned, and when the Parliament came to Tirana it made a new government, and Ahmet Bey Mati was Minister of the Interior. And that was the end of the strike. There are songs about it, Mrs. Lane, if you want me to get them for you."

POSTSCRIPT

It seemed to me the most remarkable tale of a political crisis that I had ever heard, and for some time I considered it in silence, getting the full delightful flavor of it. The moon and the minaret were a Japanese print against the turquoise sky, and somewhere a mandolin tinkled and a voice sang the "Mountain Song":

> "How beautiful is the month of May,
> When we go with the flocks to the mountains!"

Then a discrepancy in Rexh's story struck me. "If the Merdite is five days from Tirana, and Ahmet was fighting the Serbs there, how did he come to Tirana in three days? How did he know there was trouble in Tirana?"

"Ahmet is a Gheg, Mrs. Lane. A Gheg always 262
expects trouble. When he went into the mountains he left behind him men he could trust, hidden in the woods by the telephone wires. There is a small round black thing that can hear on a telephone wire—I do not know what you call it. It is small, and has a wire that goes over the telephone wire; you put it to your ear. Ahmet had got some of those from Vienna, and some little mirrors, for the men he left behind him. In the morning after Pandeli resigned, word went over the telephone to Elbassan to kill the Parliament, and to some of Hassan Prishtini's men to stay on the trails to the Merdite and not let Ahmet get back to Tirana. Ahmet's men heard this, and with the little mirrors in the sunshine they telegraphed it to the

[202] 900 mountains, and other men telephoned it with their voices to Ahmet. So he came secretly around Prishtini's men, and came walking day and night to Tirana. He left his men in the Merdite to hold the Serbs, and took the twelve hundred fresh men from the Catholic part of the Mati."

[643] "Ahmet is Mohammedan?"

"Yes, Mrs. Lane. His family has been Mohammedan since Scanderbeg died."

"In the morning I shall go to see Ahmet. He must be a remarkable man."

Rexh considered this statement. "He is a good man, yes. We have a saying in the mountains, Mrs. Lane. 'Ask a thousand men, then follow your own advice.' I think that is what Ahmet does."

I had interviewed, without exceptional enthusiasm, each member of the Albanian Cabinet save Ahmet, the Hawk, chief of the Mati. But I am not, in general, enthusiastic about the Ministers or members of Parliament that I have met in any country. In democratic countries their profession gives their minds a remarkable agility, like that of the elephant on the rolling ball. The muscular development of the elephant a-pilin' teak in the slushy mushy creek has more interest for me. This is a matter of personal taste. However, I am about to become so enthusiastic about Ahmet Bey Mati that it seems well to mention that my enthusiasms are few, and not excited either by statesmen or soldiers. Perhaps ooo six scientists and business men are my heroes. Why, then, after three minutes of talk with Ahmet Bey Mati, did I add to that short list this mountain chief of semisavage tribes, who certainly knew nothing either of science or of modern business?

Government House in Tirana is an old residence, hurriedly converted into offices. It 344 stands at the end of a street, in a courtyard surrounded by a high mud-brick wall rather badly broken at intervals. A mountain man with a rifle sits at the big gate. Another guard, even more gorgeous in white wool, scarlet jacket, and gold embroidery, stands on the wooden porch. Inside, the bare wooden floors, partitions, and stairways suggest a Middle Western American barn. Parliament Hall is furnished with school desks for the members, and a red-covered dais for the President, with the Scanderbeg flag above it, are bright colors against whitewashed walls. The offices are nondescript with overstuffed Italian furniture and fine Albanian rugs. Cigarettes are on the desks, coffee is served to callers, and my feminine experience of interviews was that facts must be fought for against a barrage of French compliments.

We had been in Tirana two days and could 000 not put a finger on any fact to account for the distinct uneasiness we felt. We were tormented by a wholly irrational feeling that, somehow, somewhere, something was wrong. Everything

POSTSCRIPT

000 we could see appeared to be all right, everyone assured us that everything was all right. I went 643 into Ahmet Bey's[1] office prepared to exchange the elaborate forms of mountain courtesy and to look at Ahmet, no more.

The office was bare. No overstuffed furniture, no rugs. Bare floor, bare walls, an unpainted wooden table, and Ahmet. He was keen, self-controlled, hard willed. That was the first impression. The second was that he was the best-dressed man, in a European sense, that I had seen for a long time. He was dressed like the successful American business man who gives *carte blanche* to a very good tailor and forgets clothes. He rose, said, "*Tu njet jeta*" ("I am glad you have come"), and while he said it he looked at me as a scientist looks at a microscope slide. Then he offered me a chair, sat down, and added, "Can I be of service to you, madame?"

The shock was such that my mind blinked. Then I said that I wished to visit Mati and the Merdite, and had come to the Ministry of the Interior to arrange for the trip. Ahmet offered me a cigarette, and lighted it, and my mind waked to alertness, for I saw that he was making time in which to choose his reply. There *was* something wrong; our feeling was right! I would trip him into giving me a clew.

Our eyes met as I thanked him for the cigarette, and I saw that he saw that I knew he had been hesitating. Idiot that I was, to betray it, I thought. And he said, "This is a difficult time

[1] [Minister of Interior [314] -- 1922 - Analyst]

in Albania, madame. I cannot tell you whether 643 you can go to the mountains or not. I cannot discuss our difficulties with you to-day. In ten days' time they will be ended. I must ask you to wait ten days, perhaps less, certainly no more. Then if you can come to see me again, I will tell you anything you want to know. If it is possible for you to go into the mountains, of course you will go as guest of the Albanian government."

Everything had been said. He accompanied me to the door, said: "Long may you live! Go on a smooth trail!" and held the door open, simultaneously for me to go out and for the next caller to come in. The door shut. And I said, "That is one of the few great men I have met."

All that day, at intervals, I recalled that interview and marveled. How had that man come from his background? From the leisurely, evasive, allusive talks of the mountains, from the intricate subtleties of Abdul Hamid's court, where had he got that incisiveness, that direct, driving force? It was genius, I said; nothing less. I went about asking, "Is Ahmet Bey a patriot?" For if he were not, certainly he was one of the most dangerous men in Albania.

I was told that he was a nephew of Essad Pasha, who sold Albania to Serbia for the title of its king, and was assassinated by Albanians in Paris. I was told that Ahmet had sold timber rights in the Mati to Italians, but had later revoked the sale. I was told that he was a very rich man, and that he held the forty thousand

643 fighting men of the Mati in his hand. I was told that the Serbs, in one of their 1921 raids, had burned the Great House in the Mati, the house in which his family had lived for five centuries.
000 Nothing else, apparently, was known about him.

Walking that night at sunset time with all Tirana, we were surprised to observe that the soldiers lounging around the fires in the courtyard of their barracks were not the same soldiers who had been there the night before. These were new men, recruits, and—by the pattern of their trousers—men from the plains of the south. Raw peasant youths, they looked. None of them carried rifles on their backs, and the few rifles we saw were held awkwardly, as by unpracticed hands. Of course there is a constant flow of recruits through Tirana, for as the government disarms the mountaineers it endeavors to build up a trained citizen army, on the Swiss plan. But we guessed, by the absence of the seasoned soldiers, that there was battle, or danger of battle, somewhere else in Albania.

Incredible, as we walked homeward under the white moon, that on this spring night men could be killing one another. Incredible, in this magic of moon and rippling water and a little owl calling love notes from the dark cypress, that anywhere there was anything but peace. The tall carved wooden gate of our courtyard was romantic in the shadow of Government House; our little house was picturesque with black shadows on white plaster; there was glamour everywhere.

[March 1922 --[316] Analyst]

POSTSCRIPT

"What's that? Is that a mouse?" said ooo Annette, through the darkness in which we lay awake, watching the moonlight on the walls and breathing the sweet spring air. We listened. Nothing. "I thought I heard something—a sort of little crackling sound."

"Listen," I said, half an hour later. "What is that throbbing?"

Curiosity's nagging at last got us from our beds. Kimono clad and in slippers we went out into our courtyard. The throbbing came from an engine; the engine that feeds the dynamo of Government House. Every window blazed electric light. We looked at them in amazement; we looked at our wrist watches under the moon. Ten o'clock. And we started when the shadow of the wall beside us moved and spoke. "Long may you live, *zonyas!* It will be very good if you go into your house."

"*Por hene asht shum i mire*" ("But the moonlight is very good, too"), I objected, and saw the moonlight glint on a rifle barrel. "Why is Government House lighted? And why are you in our courtyard?"

"There are orders," the man replied. "Ahmet Bey Mati has spoken. The American *zonyas* will go into their house."

He would say nothing more, and there seemed indeed nothing else to do, so we went. The sound that lifted us from our pillows once more was one that I shall not forget, nor willingly hear again. It came through the night like a supernatural thing of hate and fury and irresistible power. We did not know what it was; we had no power to wonder what it was; we heard it with an agony of fear, involuntary, uncontrollable as the pain of a stripped nerve. I remember now that instant and eternity of time, and cannot bear the memory. I had not known that even in nightmare one could drop into such abysses of the human spirit. Then Tirana seemed to explode like a bunch of giant firecrackers, and with such relief as I cannot describe I cried: "Rifles! They're taking Tirana!" And we tumbled out of our beds and grasped wildly in the darkness for our clothes.

Rifles are human possessions; rifles are solid things that at worst can only kill. The sound of the rifles, multiplied a thousand times by echoing courtyard walls, muffled and enabled us to bear that other sound, still faintly heard through the uproar. "It's only their war cry," we babbled to each other. "It's the mountain men fighting. That's all it is." Coherence came back to our minds. "It's the Dibra," I said. "Dibra and the refugee Kossova men, come to take the government away from the Toshks." And we ran out into the courtyard.

The rest of that night was anticlimax. Bafflement. Weary and chilly, we came back to our house at three o'clock. We had explored the courtyard, finding only that the shadows were full of silent, waiting men. They spoke little; they said, in reply to our questions, that they

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

did not know what was happening. We had ventured out of the courtyard into Tirana, that low white town that, to the eye, seemed sleeping in the moonlight, and to the ear was bedlam. Bullets were whizzing, scattering white plaster, smashing tiles. But mosques and minarets, arcaded streets, arched stone bridge, rippling water, were peaceful in the moonlight. No human being seemed to be abroad, save us two, who wandered like forsaken ghosts through the incredible clamor.

The windows of the Vocational School were alight, the American flag was over the gate. We found the Americans making ready a midnight luncheon in the kitchen, whose windows were barricaded against bullets. Great Scott! they said, why hadn't we stayed in bed? Have some baked beans? We ate the beans and explained that we wanted to know what was happening. Who knew what was happening, in Albania? said they, yawning. Better go home to bed; time enough to find out in the morning what was happening. So, weary and chilly, we went home to bed. The rifles were still crackling like madly popping corn, tiles were still crashing from roofs and plaster from walls, but the war cries were still. We slept fitfully.

A tapping on our window sill roused us again. The moonlight was gone from our wall, the open window was a square of paler darkness in the darkness. "I beg your pardon, I sincerely beg your pardon," said a voice in French. "This is

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

most unconventional, I know. But if you will pardon the lateness of the hour, may I ask you to permit us to call?" It was the voice of His Excellency Spiro Koleko, Minister of Public Works.

He came in, accompanied by the secretary of the Prime Minister. We sat up in our beds, coats around our shoulders, and told them where to find chairs and cigarettes. They said that if we did not mind they would not light the lamp. We asked what had occurred.

"*Rien, rien du tout, mesdames,*" said the Minister of Public Works. "*Tout est tranquil.*"

"The ancient Greeks had a saying," began the secretary, gave us that saying in Greek, and continued to speak for some time, not uninterestingly, of Greek and other philosophers. The social tone of that early morning call was impeccable. Good breeding required that we maintain it. We sat exasperated in the dark, saying to ourselves that we would gladly murder these two uncommunicative men. But we felt that to ask them to leave the shelter of our house would be murder, in cold fact. In the wan daylight of six o'clock they thanked us for our hospitality, and went.

Tirana was peaceful in the morning sunlight. Donkeys laden with cedar boughs picked their footing on the uneven cobbles; women with gayly painted cradles on their backs trudged behind the donkeys. Ducks were swimming in the brimming gutters. Rrok Perolli stood in the doorway of the Hotel Europa, enjoying the spring air.

Elez Jusuf, chief of the Dibra, with five hundred men, had fought his way into Tirana, he said. The Albanian government had—well, had gone to Elbassan. Elez Jusuf was intrenched in the quarter beyond the mosque, a maze of houses and walled yards entered by only two streets. For reasons unknown, he had not walked on into Government House.

"Ahmet has gone to Elbassan?" The dismay of my voice surprised me.

No, he was still in Tirana. He was legally, in fact, the government; by law, when a Minister was out of town his duties fell to one of the Ministers remaining. Ahmet was the only one left, except the necessarily idle Minister of Public Works. But what could he do? Elez Jusuf was in the capital, with five hundred fighting men of the Dibra. Ahmet had less than two hundred men, raw recruits from the peasant village of the south. And more information came now from the open door of reticence. Two days before, Byram Gjuri, an Albanian Gheg chief of tribes in Montenegro, who had been supplied with arms from D'Annunzio in Fiume, had marched on Scutari. Scutari had sent him word that it would fight, and had frantically appealed to Tirana for help. That was where the regular troops of Tirana had gone. The telephone line to Scutari was cut. There had been an attack from the Dibra on Elbassan; the fighting men

○○○ of Elbassan had beaten it off, but they were staying in Elbassan through this trouble.

On the face of it, the thing was organized—organized, and supplied with arms and money from outside Albania. Obviously, the capital was lost. The government had fled. The telephone lines were cut. Albania had been broken into its diverse tribes again, disintegrated into particles held together only by a common spirit which could no longer express itself coherently. After all the years of fighting and blockade, all the desperate triumphs of diplomacy in Versailles and Geneva, here was chaos again, and fresh invaders.

This tragedy was behind the curtain of silence that isolates Albania from the world. It went on in darkness, unknown. It meant another war in the Balkans, the kindler of wars in Europe. All along a thousand miles of new frontier and ancient hatred any outbreak in the Balkans would spread. Italy would cross the Adriatic again; what would Jugo-Slavia say to that? Serbia would come down in force from the north; would Croatia, Bosnia, Dalmatia, Montenegro, not seize the opportunity to strike at Serbia, the hated new master? Could Jugo-Slavia turn her back on Hungary, in safety? All the Balkans and Central Europe are tinder to any spark, to-day. As they were in 1914.

But at that moment I was caring for Albania, for the Albanians who had sheltered me by their fires and divided with me their corn bread and

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EG1 Albania EG1

goat's-milk cheese. It was insupportable to me that war was going again like a flame over those mountain villages, that the last of their men must fight again on the edge of precipices, and the last of their women and children die on the trails. There was desperation in the hope, the irrational faith, which I placed in Ahmet, the Hawk, chief of the Mati. "Ahmet will do something," I said.

"How can he? The Dibra men are in Tirana, and he has no soldiers."

"He will do something," I said, "because he must."

"'I think this will be a good year for pears,' said the bear. 'Why?' said the other bear. And the first bear replied, 'Because I like them.'"

"And who knows," said I with violence, "that it isn't a good year for pears?"

Thus we talked in the cafés, drinking coffee and looking out through white arches at the plane trees and the donkeys patiently trudging by. There was nothing else to do. Elez Jusuf was in Tirana, behind enigmatic walls. Why did he not come out? We did not know. Ahmet was alone in Government House. The sunshine was warm on white Tirana, the water rippled in the gutters, the plane trees unfolded their tiny leaves. The men of Tirana, that lukewarm, Mohammedan, un-Albanian city, did nothing. They waited to see what would happen. We all waited. The morning went by.

The morning went very slowly by, and at noon an automobile came roaring and shaking down the cobbled street. It brought Harry Charles Augustus Eyres, British minister to Albania. We lunched with him at the Red Cross house. Lean, dry, humorous eyed, gray haired, wholly the Englishman, he talked of the psychology of Eastern peoples. He had been forty years a diplomat in the Near East, and knew his subject. I was perhaps wrong in connecting his official presence in Albania with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's negotiations for the Valona oil fields. He lived in Durazzo, and had that morning received a telephone message—not from Ahmet—advising him of the situation in Tirana.

"I must go and see my old friend Elez," he said. It was his only reference to the immediate situation. "Elez is a fine old chap, you know. Patriotic Albanian. He had five thousand Dibra men ready to go into Serbia last year. Bit of a job I had, too, persuading him that it wasn't done, really."

After luncheon he departed, to see his old friend Elez. Later he was seen riding to Government House. At dinner he said that negotiations were opened. One inferred that this little matter was practically settled.

"Queer thing, you know, this tale of Elez Jusuf's," he further remarked. Elez Jusuf, it appeared, said that he was astounded to find himself in the position of a rebel against the Albanian government. With the mildest intentions, he had been coming down to Tirana to speak with that government. Parliament had been elected when the Serbs were holding all of Dibra; the Dibra representatives had been elected by refugees, and Parliament had recently unseated them on the ground that they were not properly elected. This left Dibra without representation in the council of chiefs, said Elez. Surely it was proper that the chief of the Dibra should come to Tirana to speak for Dibra to the government. He traveled with an armed escort, of course, as a chief should. On the trail he met his friends Zija Dibra and Mustapha Kruja, with their escorts. They came on together. An hour from Tirana, on the previous evening, they had met a body of government soldiers, sixty in number. These soldiers had treacherously fired upon him. His men had naturally returned the fire. The captain of the soldiers was killed, the second in command, Sied Bey, fell down a cliff when his horse was shot beneath him, and Elez Jusuf, very much surprised and perturbed, came on to Tirana. He said he did not know what else to do. Just before reaching Tirana, he had met a machine gun or two, and had taken them along with him, after some incidental fighting. Why was the government attacking him with machine guns? he demanded. He was not moving against the government, with five hundred men. When the Dibra moved, it put five thousand fighting men on the trails.

"A queer tale," said Mr. Eyres. "I don't know what to make of it. On my life, I believe the old fellow's sincere."

POSTSCRIPT

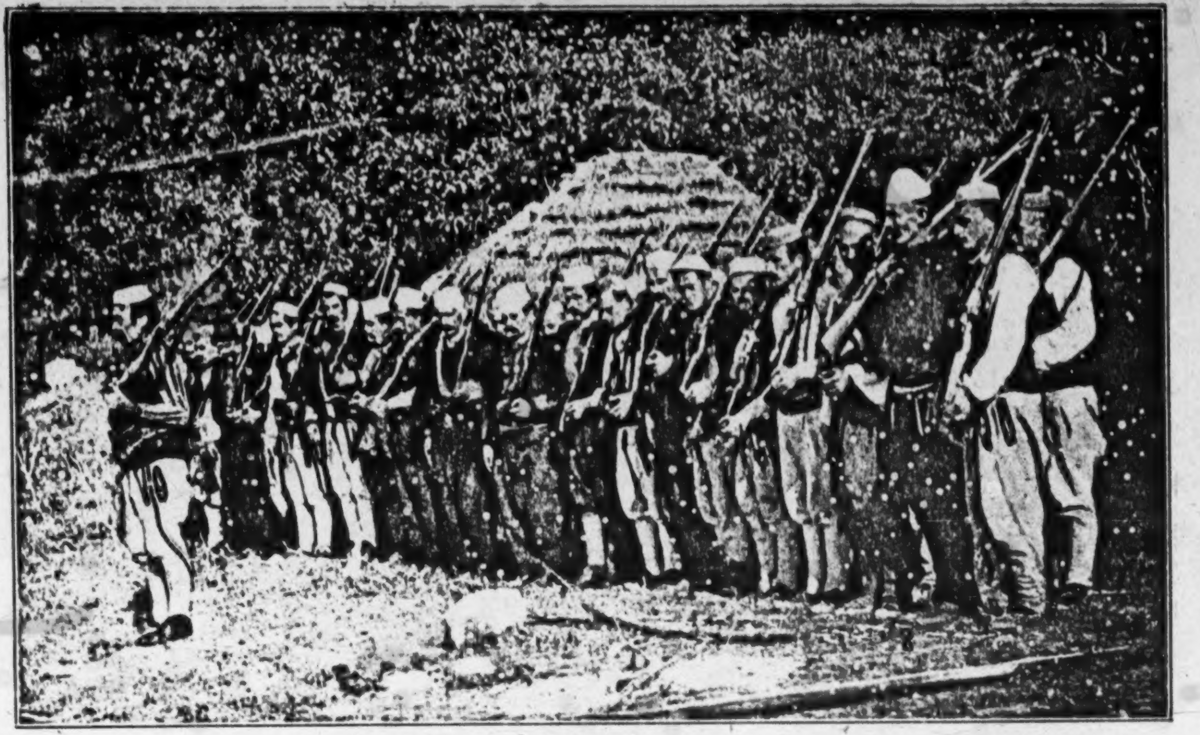
000 The Albanians, he said, were a surprising people. Take Ahmet, now. That afternoon Ahmet had said to him, "You recall the words of Aristides?" Mr. Eyres, supposing the reference was to some Albanian unknown to him, had inquired, "Who is Aristides?" And, by Jove! the chap meant the Greek! Fancy an Albanian knowing about Aristides!

We slept upon these meager developments. Elez Jusuf was still in Tirana; Ahmet still in Government House. The dynamo ran all night.

Next morning, more news in the cafés. Ahmet was demanding that Elez Jusuf give up his arms and surrender himself, Mustapha Kruja, and Zija Dibra for trial. Elez Jusuf replied that it was an insult to suggest that any Dibra man gave up his rifle while he lived. If Mati thought it could bring that shame upon the Dibra, the rifles of Dibra would finish the talking. Mustapha Kruja had disappeared in the night; his men were left leaderless with Elez behind the barricades. Zija Dibra was still there. Mustapha Kruja and Zija Dibra were in the pay of Italy; Elez Jusuf had been misled, tricked, by them. This was the talk in the cafés.

Nearly noon, and talk stopping in the cafés. Shops closing, quietly, one by one. A tightening, an apprehension, in the air. New faces, new costumes, in the streets. Slowly, slowly, little by little, Tirana was filling with tall, keen-eyed,
[291 weather-bitten men. Men in the tight white trousers and rawhide opangi of the northern
Tirana mountains]

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGI Albania EGI



THE FIGHTING MEN FROM THE MOUNTAINS WHO CAME INTO TIRANA TO DEFEND THE GOVERNMENT WHILE ELEZ JUSUF WAS IN TIRANA

In this group are men from seven tribes, distinguishable by the pattern of their trousers.

3260a

701

Tirana mountains. Men in the fuller white trousers and embroidered socks of the central mountains. Men in the very full brown trousers and curve-toed moccasins of more southern tribes. Mountain men, all of them. They sat on the low walls around the mosques, talking. They lounged on the curbstones, they sauntered on the streets. More and more of them. Impossible to estimate how many. A thin little trickle going steadily in and out of Government House. And it was strange how a sense of Government House, a sense of the one man alone behind those broken walls, grew upon Tirana. It was as though Government House were a huge, mysterious, living thing. Men walking in the streets glanced at it furtively, as if it might be watching them. Groups stood and stared at it. There it was, quite still. Still, like a crouching animal. What would it do?

Three o'clock, and suddenly the answer. A gust of rifle shots, a growl of machine guns, and the storm was on us. The streets were swept clean of people in one quick scurry; windows barred, doors bolted. And we were running through a swarm of bullets that sang like mosquitoes. Running, we cried to each other, "Tricked the British Empire, by Jove!" For the very sound of the guns said that this was grim earnest, this was the end. Ahmet had gained time enough to bring in the mountain men. Now he was fighting.

At seven o'clock the next morning he was still

POSTSCRIPT

600 fighting. Fifteen hours, without a break, and Elez Jusuf was still alive and still in Tirana. When the firing died in the bright morning we went picking our way through wreckage of mud-brick walls, around bloody cobbles, past plaster houses ripped to tatters by bullets. In the heart of the wreckage Elez Jusuf was still holding out.

At ten o'clock a drum beat in the street before the mosque where the dead men lay, and a crowd listened to the singsong of the government crier of news. He cried that at twelve o'clock Ahmet Bey would burn the quarter that sheltered Elez Jusuf. Citizens whose homes were there had two hours to take out their movable property. Passports to enter and leave the quarter, obtainable at the post office. Machine guns surround the quarter. Listen well! At twelve o'clock the machine guns will start and the quarter will burn. After twelve o'clock no man leaves it alive. By order of Ahmet Bey Mati.

It is impossible to describe the feeling that day in Tirana. It was as though a giant hand closed upon the heart, slowly, inexorably. Death. At twelve o'clock the machine guns will start and the quarter will burn. No man will leave it alive. Five hundred men. And this was true. It was not a dream nor a tale in a book. It was reality. We asked, "Will Ahmet do it?" as one struggles to awaken from nightmare. We were always answered, quietly, "Yes." Men were not speaking much, that day; they simply said, "Yes."

POSTSCRIPT

The procession began. Women bowed under loads of things, blankets, rugs, chairs, a frying pan, a child's toy. Children going before them lugging the spinning-wheel, the hand loom. Smaller children stumbling and holding on to skirts. Veiled women, sobbing behind the veils, walking pigeon toed and pitifully on high heels, in hampering trousers, carrying boxes too heavy, so that they must stop to rest. One little donkey, going back and forth, back and forth, bringing out trunks and bedsteads and house doors. And for some time a frantic woman, veiled, hysterical, clung to us, clung to our skirts on hands and knees, talking a language we could not understand, pleading, begging as if for her life, holding up five fingers, measuring five distances from the ground. Maddening, our inability to understand her. Why the five fingers? Five what? How could we do what she wanted? A stranger who spoke French at last translated her words for us. She was a Turkish woman, her husband was in Constantinople; her five children—little, little children—were in the quarter. She had been visiting a friend when Elez Jusuf came in. For two days she had not been able to get back to the children, and now she saw that other people were bringing out things, and the soldiers would not let her in to get her children. We took her to the post office and got her the permit to pass the soldiers. That was that.

At eleven o'clock we met a teacher in the

POSTSCRIPT

ooo Vocational School. He said: "I have come out for a minute, between classes. It—— I wanted to get away from the boys. We have three grandsons of Elez Jusuf, you know." We had not known, and, knowing, what could one say? The teacher seemed to feel that speaking about it would make it easier to go back to them. "We couldn't keep the news out. All these boys know Albanian politics so well. Damn it! the finest boys God ever made." There were tears in his eyes and his words were not profane. "Not one of them missed one recitation since this thing started. We moved the desks and barricaded the windows; classes going right on. Boys said to me this morning, they can't fight for Albania, but they can study for her. Breaks you all up, somehow," he said, apologetically, and blew his nose. "Damn it!" he said again. "I—— That young boy from the Dibra got up to answer a question just now, and forgot the question. I said, 'Never mind.' I was going to pass it over. He said: 'No, please ask it again, sir. I won't be much longer in class.' I thought he was going to break down, on that, but he answered the question. Answered it right. Goes straight on, with his head up. Their father's in that hell hole, too. The boy 'll have to go back and be chief of the Dibra."

It was impossible to say anything. We shook his hand and he went back to the class. Mr. Eyres and his secretary went back and forth, from Elez to Ahmet, from Ahmet to Elez, hastening, followed by the eyes of us all. Their faces were not encouraging.

Ten minutes to twelve. The last machine gun chuckling over the cobbles. Six minutes to twelve. Files of men, with oil cans, going through the streets. Four minutes to twelve, and the streets emptied save for the last frantic stragglers coming with last armfuls of things. Three minutes to twelve—and the drum beating! The open space before the mosque was a mass of bodies, a suffocation of held breaths. Listen well, people of Tirana! Elez Jusuf asks for time. A council is talking. At two o'clock the machine guns will start, and the quarter will burn. At two o'clock. By order of Ahmet Bey Mati.

It would seem that the pressure of that giant hand would ease, but it continued to tighten slowly, minute by minute. It continued to tighten, even when at four minutes to two o'clock the crier called that the council was still talking. Four o'clock, the third, last order. At six minutes to four o'clock men were going with lighted torches; the oil had been spread and wooden sprayers had thrown it over the roofs. At five minutes to four o'clock the roar of an automobile in the streets, and Elez Jusuf appeared, riding to Government House in the English car, Mr. Eyres beside him. Tirana followed them to the gate in a wave of men, a wave that slowed, eddied before the gate, and stopped. It seemed that time stopped with it.

Out of the gate a rider, lashing a galloping ooo horse. Clatter of spark-scattering hoofs on the cobbles, swish of the whip, and a swirl of wind following. Four o'clock, and the ripping sound of one machine gun, stopped abruptly. No more.

Ten minutes after four o'clock, and Elez Jusuf and Mr. Eyres riding out of the gate. Elez Jusuf sat straight and proudly; a fine old mountaineer in his Scanderbeg jacket and silver chains, overlooking the crowd as though it were not there. Only a glimpse of black Scanderbeg jacket, silver chains, gray hair, profile of firm lines, and Elez Jusuf had made entrance and exit.

Immediately after the automobile, while the gate of Government House still fascinated, two riders came through it. They were Austrian engineers, in khaki riding clothes and puttees. They rode pack mules, and camping outfit complete with tent was roped to the wooden saddles. We knew them slightly, and stopped them as they came leisurely by, to ask what they knew.

Nothing, they said. Ahmet had sent for them that morning—they were engineers employed by the government—and had asked them to make ready to go out toward Dibra, to investigate and report on the possibility of lighting Tirana with electricity from a waterfall twenty miles away. They had been ready at one o'clock, and Ahmet had sent asking them to wait, ready, in the courtyard of Government House until he gave them the word to start. Word had that moment come, and they were starting.

They stirred the smallest of interest as they rode on through Tirana. Tirana was relaxing, as a tired man sighs. Men sat on the curbs, on the low walls, on the ground. There was a crowd in the cafés, but no singing, and little talking. The sunset hour was beginning, but no one walked.

In the whitewashed dining room of the Vocational School we sat drinking tea. Mr. Eyres disclaimed the tiredness of his eyes. It had been most interesting, he said. An interview he would not forget, that between old Elez and Ahmet. "A strong man, Ahmet. Perhaps a little young, just twenty-six, they tell me. Well, time will remedy that." Elez had been persuaded to go to Government House to meet and talk with Ahmet. "Really a remarkable man, old Elez. He'd never before seen an automobile, you know. Walked right up to it, sat in it, as though he had ridden in one all his life; never turned a hair, coming or going. Must have been a bit of a strain, after all he'd gone through." He said to Ahmet that he had talked with his men. They would not give up their rifles. If it were required that they give up their rifles, Elez would go back to his men and they would die fighting. Ahmet said, "Mustapha Kruja will be hanged when we find him. Zija Dibra must leave Albania forever. Give me a *besa* of peace and go back to the Dibra with your rifles."

Elez was silent a moment, and then gave the *besa*. The Dibra, he said, would be loyal to the Constitutional Government of Albania as long as he lived, and as long as his son's sons ruled the Dibra. He saluted, Ahmet saluted; the official interview was ended. And the messenger left to countermand the orders given. "Something rather dramatic about these chaps, really. Done just like that. No palavering, no signing of papers. Not necessary, and Ahmet knows it. Elez would be cut into bits before he'd break a *besa*. They're admirable, in their way, these men."

Elez, turning to go, had turned back to speak again to Ahmet. The Dibra and the Mati had long been enemies, he said. There had been no friendship between them since the days of Scanderbeg. Was this not a time to forget that old enmity? In their mountains, Dibra had not understood the Tirana government. During those three days in Tirana, Elez said, he had learned many new things. He believed now that Ahmet Mati was fighting for Albania. Would Ahmet join him in a *besa* of peace between Mati and Dibra?

This had been entirely unexpected, Mr. Eyres said. However, Ahmet did not turn a hair. He and Elez made the *besa* of peace, and then Elez added another thing. "I have heard," he said to Ahmet, "that you intend to disarm the men of Dibra. You have not expected to do that without fighting. Now I, Elez Jusuf, chief of the Dibra, say this: The Serbs hold our city of Dibra. The Serbs are on the lands of my people. Twice in this year the Serbs have come to kill our men and burn our villages. Only our rifles stand between us and the Serbs. But you are the chief of Albania and you are a wise chief. When you think it is time to come to the Dibra to take away the rifles of the Dibra, I will give you every rifle. There will be no trouble. I say this, on the honor of Dibra."

Even this, to Mr. Eyres's deeper astonishment, did not cause Ahmet to turn that hair. He said merely, "That is well." The interview was ended. On the way back to his men, Elez suggested to Mr. Eyres that he leave his son as hostage to insure that he had spoken the truth. If he broke the *besa,* he said, in a matter-of-fact manner, Mr. Eyres might kill his son. Misunderstanding Mr. Eyres's reaction to this offer, he added that his son would be glad to make his life a forfeit for the honor of Dibra. "But what on earth would I do with the chap?" said Mr. Eyres to us. "Bless my soul, I know old Elez will keep his word! Well, rather! I told the old man to jolly well take his son along with him. By the way, the young Elez has two lads of his own here in this school. Asked me to give them greeting from him, said he was sorry he couldn't stop to see them. Elez's riding out on the Dibra trail by this time, I expect."

The young secretary of the absent Prime Minister came at that moment to confirm this conjecture. The crisis was over. Albania, we said, was saved once more. If the uprising had been —who could say?—an Italian plot, Italy was ooo checkmated again. There would be no new outbreak in the Balkans this time, and that precarious balance in all European politics, the Balkan equilibrium, was unchanged. We were saying this, and I was thinking of the two Austrian engineers riding behind the retreating Dibra men on their quest for electric lights for Tirana, when the second blow fell upon us.

The Red Cross mail car, gone that morning to meet the Italian steamer at Durazzo, returned with the news that Hamid Bey Toptani, brother of Essad Pasha, had taken Durazzo. He was an hour from Tirana, coming on the Durazzo road, with at least six hundred armed men. How many more were hidden in the hills when the automobile passed, no one could guess. Under the American flag, the car had gone and come through the lines, and no secret had been made of the fact that Tirana would be attacked that night.

There is a point at which human nerves cease to report emotion. For three days and nights we had felt all that we are capable of feeling. We heard this news blankly, understanding it, thinking about it, and hardly caring. There was no resilience left in us with which to care. It was like beginning again a story we had once read.

"Where did Hamid Bey Toptani get his arms?" I asked. For the Toptani family are not mountaineers, nor chiefs of mountaineers. The peasants on the great estates of the plains do not carry rifles.

POSTSCRIPT

"There is an Italian gunboat in the harbor of Durazzo, and another at San Giovanni," said the American who had gone with the mail.

"It does look like a well-organized plan," we said. Scutari attacked, Elbassan attacked, Durazzo taken, Tirana attacked from the west and from the east. A plot, in which only one small thing had gone wrong. Had old Elez Jusuf, tricked by his two friends into involving the Dibra, come too early to Tirana? Had Mustapha Kruja and Zija Dibra intended to bring the Dibra men from the east when Hamid Bey Toptani came from the west? Was it because the plan miscarried that they had urged Elez Jusuf to sit intrenched in Tirana, while they hoped that Toptani would come in time to help them take Government House? Or had the Dibra men come on time, and Toptani purposely delayed, to leave the hard fighting in Tirana to the Dibra men?

Futile questions, for we could not know the answers. And our thoughts settled upon Ahmet, three days and nights without sleep or rest, the one man who was the government, sitting alone in Government House with the checkerboard of this situation before him. How well he had moved the pieces! Bringing in the British minister, to give him time to bring in his fighting men. Settled, in his mind, that to-day must remove Elez Jusuf, though he burned half Tirana to do it. And sending out, ten minutes behind Elez, those two engineers to plan electric lights ooo for the capital! To plan electric lights for the city that—surely he knew it—Hamid Bey Toptani would attack that night. Ahmet, the Hawk, chief of the Mati, come from the court of Abdul Hamid when sixteen years old, to fight the Serbs in the mountains. The chiefs of the Mati must lace his opangi before every battle, because he did not know how to lace opangi. But the chiefs of the Mati loved him.

Two horses went cantering past the windows of the Red Cross dining room, and because the clatter of horse's hoofs is rare in Tirana they must be bringing news. From the gateway of the courtyard we watched them—a rider in the Mati costume, leading a lean, eager bay horse. They went through the gate to Government House. In a moment they reappeared, Ahmet Bey Mati riding the bay. He still wore the clothes in which I had seen him; rumpled a little, they spoke of the sleepless nights, and his face was white with fatigue. On his head an astrakan fez; over his shoulder the strap that held a rifle; around his waist the cartridge belt, and a belt holding silver-hilted revolver and knives. A strange figure, in tailored business suit, riding the lean bay through the streets of Tirana. Behind him, coming with the long swinging walk of the mountaineers, perhaps sixty Mati men.

"Long may you live, *zonya!*" said he, touching the astrakan fez in salute.

"Long may you live, Ahmet Mati!"

They rode past the pictured mosque, down the

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

street of little shops and cafés, closed now, past the cemetery with its toppling turbaned gravestones. At the barracks they stopped. For a moment Ahmet spoke with the chiefs who gathered around his horse. Then he rode on, out on the road to Durazzo, and behind him went his hundreds upon hundreds of fighting men. It was the sunset hour; the mountains and the sky were beautiful, and the little owl was beginning to call from the Cypress of the Dead. The prayers of the *hodjis* rose to Allah from the tops of the white minarets.

The moon was late that night, and mountains and plains were covered with darkness when the rifles began to crackle on the hills. Little flames of rifle fire ran along the tops of the hills like flickering lightning. It was as though the hills were crackling with electricity.

We stood in the courtyard of our house, watching them. Government House was dark; the engine was no longer running. The little owl called from the Cypress of the Dead. Sied Bey came through the gate and said to us in French that he feared there would be trouble again in Tirana that night; might the women and children of his family stay in the Red Cross house? There was his old mother, who was ill; his sister, and many children of his brothers and his cousins, little children. They had come in that day from his estate, where the fighting was. Did we think the Red Cross would give them shelter till morning, under the American flag?

POSTSCRIPT

They came behind him, through the darkness, and we said we would take them to the Vocational School. Sied Bey could not leave his post at Government House. There were the two veiled women, and nine women servants carrying rolls of bedding, and so many little girls in voluminous trousers, with chains of gold coins on foreheads and necks, and so many very small boys in Turkish trousers and Scanderbeg jackets, that we never counted them. We got them all into the Red Cross dining room, where there was space for them to sleep on the floor, and we offered them cigarettes and coffee. Within the dining room the sound of the rifle fire was no louder than the soft crackling of burning wood.

The older woman, worn and wrinkled and pale with illness, sat on the cushions arranged for her by a servant, accepted the cigarette which another servant had put in a long jeweled holder, and smoked silently. But the younger one, throwing back her veil with a violent movement, startled us by the revelation of a strong, beautiful face and eyes full of anger. She spurned the cushions, she walked up and down like a furious animal in a cage.

"Pardon me," she said, suddenly, in perfect English. "Forgive me. You are good to shelter my mother. But I—but I am not made to stay here, to stay here in a house, when there is fighting. Do you hear the rifles?" She struck her clenched hand against the edge of the table, and blood came on the knuckles. She walked up and down.

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

POSTSCRIPT

"Do you think I cannot fight?" she said. "Ask my brother. Ask the Serbs if I can fight. There is not a man in Albania who knows a rifle better than I. They did not keep me in a house when the Serbs came! I was out on the hills with the men when the Serbs came. And now—now when traitors, when men who sell their honor for money, are murdering Albania, I must sit in a house! I must sit on a cushion!" She stamped on the cushion. "I, who have killed nineteen Serbs with these hands! I must stay with my mother, because she is ill. Let Sied stay with my mother. I have a rifle; I want to fight! Do you hear the rifles?"

We were appalled. We were speechless before that infuriated woman who had killed nineteen Serbs with her hands. We went away, leaving her walking up and down, while her mother silently smoked and the children watched from their heaps of rugs.

In the street by the gate of Government House Sied Bey was watching the sky to the northwest. Five red flares were there now, and the rifle fire was running like flickering lightning over the western hills.

"It is too bad my sister is not there," he said. He was proud of her. "My sister was a lion when the Serbs came in. There is no man better than my sister in a battle."

He had not taken his gaze from the red flares. "Five villages," he said as though to himself. "This morning I was *seigneur* of those five villages, and to-night they are burning. *Eh bien,*" he said. "They were rebels, then, my peasants. They were sheltering Hamid Bey. Their villages must be burned."

The rifle fire went away over the hills. It wrote on the darkness as it went that Hamid Bey Toptani was retreating. Then the moon rose over the eastern mountains, and Tirana was white in the moonlight, and there was no sound except the flowing of water in the gutters and the calling of the little owl in the cypress.

In the morning, all Tirana gathered silently about the strangest sight ever known in that youngest city of Albania, which remembers only three hundred years. Workmen were in the cemeteries. Groups of ragged workmen walked upon the graves, loading the turbaned gravestones on wheelbarrows, wheeling them away and dumping them beside the Durazzo road. There were wooden plows, drawn by oxen, going over the Mohammedan graves, plowing down the weeds. Ahmet Bey had given orders, before he left Tirana, that all the old sacred cemeteries be made into public parks. The sensation was profound. All day long a mass of fezzes surrounded each cemetery. Their wearers said nothing, said not one word; they stood and watched, silently. The workmen worked silently. The only sound was the grating of levers on tombstones, the crunching sound of the plow on the graves.

There was no news from Durazzo.

In the afternoon, another surprise for the citizens of Tirana. Three hundred men were working on the Durazzo road. They began where the road turns, beyond the barracks. With plows they went up and down the road, many times. Ahmet had said that the road must be plowed deeply. Ahmet had said that the road must be made slightly rounded, broad, with ditches on either side. Men were digging the ditches. And two by two, along the road, men were sitting facing each other, a hard rock between their knees and hammers in their hands. Rhythmically striking, they were breaking into little fragments the old turbaned gravestones from the cemeteries. Heaps of the broken rock grew around them. Farther down the Durazzo road more rocks were being piled ready for them to break. Donkeys were carrying these rocks from the river bed east of Tirana.

At sunset Tirana went out to walk, and there was that sight. No longer a road to walk upon, but havoc of plowed ground and broken stones. Ahmet Bey Mati had said that there must be a stone road from Tirana to Durazzo, forty miles. The road was following him on the way he had gone to fight Hamid Bey Toptani. There was still no news from that fight.

The people said, "Ahmet Bey Mati," in a strange tone. Partly amazed, partly awed, partly colorless shock. They said, "Ahmet Bey Mati," but the placards that men were tacking to the Cypress of the Dead were signed simply, Ahmet Zogu. He no longer called himself a bey;

POSTSCRIPT

ooohe no longer used even the Turkish title given his family when Scanderbeg was dead and the family became Mohammedan, the title which changed the old name, Zogu, to Zogolli. The placards said that Tirana was under military law; all shops and cafés would be closed, and no one walk on the streets, after nine o'clock. Signed, Ahmet Zogu.

At nine o'clock not a light showed on the streets and no footsteps were heard on the cobbles. Ahmet Bey Mati had become an awful invisible figure, a sort of limitless and incomprehensible power, in the darkness over Tirana. There was still no news from Durazzo.

Next morning the telegraph wire from Durazzo began again to click the instrument in the room above the post office. Orders were coming from Ahmet Bey Mati. Among them, orders that we should have guides, horses, and interpreters for our trip to the mountains; a message to us that the chiefs of Mati and Merdite, and the prefect of Scutari, had been advised of our coming and would give us all facilities. On the wire the operators talked, and travel was again open on the Durazzo road. News poured upon us.

Hamid Bey's forces had been routed and scattered; Hamid Bey's family had escaped on an Italian gunboat; Hamid Bey had been pursued, turned back on the very shore where a boat waited for him, was being hunted northward through the mountains. Three men had been hanged at Shijak, and the *han* there. which had been Hamid Bey's headquarters, was burned. Durazzo had made no resistance to Ahmet. Ahmet had fined Durazzo five thousand napoleons—twenty thousand dollars—to punish it for not resisting Hamid Bey. Tirana was fined five thousand napoleons for not helping the government when the Dibra men came in. Ahmet Bey had arrested twenty-nine men, who would be tried in court for treason. Five villages on Sied Bey's estate were ashes, the families homeless. Hamid Bey's property was confiscated; his country house would be burned. Byram Gjuri had fled to Belgrade. Scutari had not been attacked. Zija Dibra would be taken to-morrow to Durazzo, to be put on a steamer for Constantinople. All Albania was quiet.

That day I met on the street His Excellency Spiro Keleko, Minister of Public Works, who had called upon us in the night when the government was fleeing from Tirana. "*Vous voyez, madame,*" said he, triumphantly, "*Je vous ai dit la vérité. Tout est tranquil.*"

There is no more to this tale. This was the end of the March rebellion of 1922, which for a week was one of the lighted fuses to the powder magazine of Europe. It was lighted—I can only guess by whom—and was stamped out by a chief of the Mati mountaineers, in Albania. A little country, which no one knows. Albania—somewhere in the Balkans, isn't it? Or is it in the Caucasus? One of those places that are always having revolutions, people fighting among them-ooo selves. Ought to have sense enough to settle down and go to work.

There is no more to this tale. Our trip to the mountains is not part of it. Only a few more pictures come into my mind, when I remember those days in Tirana.

Picture of Ahmet Zogu, riding back from Durazzo. Riding the tired bay horse, at the head of his Mati men. Riding through a silent crowd which silently parted to let him pass. Rifle and revolver, knives and cartridge belt, gone. The gray business suit cleaned and pressed. A white face, and darkness under the eyes, and eyes that see straight to the end of things. Soft tramping of feet in rawhide opangi behind him, and the Mati men in dingy black-braided trousers and colored sashes and Scanderbeg jackets, rifles all-angled above their kerchiefed heads, pouring down the narrow street. Then lumbering behind them, dust filmed and mud splashed, the empty automobile of the Albanian government, gone forty miles to Durazzo to fetch Ahmet and come back empty because he would ride at the head of his men. It goes last through the gates of Government House, and the crowd can gaze only at the gate and its solitary guard.

Picture of Ahmet in his house. He sits in a gilded Louis Seize chair, under a painted Turkish ceiling. Half a hundred rifles, museum pieces he has chosen from the long mule trains of rifles brought down to Tirana as the mountain tribes are disarmed, are stacked behind his chair. A box telephone on the wall, an English grammar on the table, a Mati man lying on the threshold of the door. Ahmet saying: "Albania needs men, needs trained men. What am I, with power in my hands that I cannot use because I am ignorant? I do not know Europe, America. Tirana needs factories, Albania needs industries. The people are starving and ragged; they walk with bare feet over the earth that covers their fortunes. We need capitalistic development, not a hundred years from now, but to-day. I am no good for that. How can we handle this? You are from America. Can you tell us? Oil, mines, forests, water power, land—what can Albania do with them, without trained men?"

Another picture, a little one. Ahmet smiling. "Ah, but you wouldn't have been surprised if you had known, as I did, the men who were the rebels. They were rich men. I thought, 'Not all will be killed in the fighting; we will capture some, arrest others. Why try them and hang them? Their money will be more useful than their bodies. We will try them and fine them.' I thought how much money they had, and decided there was enough money there to pay for electric lights for Tirana, so naturally I sent for engineers to go out as soon as the Dibra trail was clear."

"You had no doubt that you'd clear the trail?"

"I had no time to doubt. I was busy clearing it."

And a last picture, always to be remembered

POSTSCRIPT

000 by those who know Tirana. It is the sunset hour, and all Tirana goes walking in the colored evening air. Tirana goes walking down the smooth Durazzo road, the road that is white and firm beneath the feet, from the turn beyond the barracks all the way to the sea. The Cabinet Ministers of Albania go walking in a row, sedately, their hands behind their backs, and in the middle walks Ahmet Zogu, elected by Parliament Prime Minister of Albania. Six even paces behind them marches their escort, a single row of soldiers.

533 539 The eastern mountains are catching the last light of the sun and making magic with it. Plum purple, orange gold, mauve and violet and blue, the colors shift and change, and the air is faintly golden over the green plains where the mountain men are gathering as they used to gather in the evenings long before Athens was built. Holding hands in long lines, moving in a stamping circle, they are singing songs improvised by their leader, who, with a handkerchief in his hand, acts in pantomime the verses he creates. The strange, wild song in which they have clothed and preserved the tales of all their heroes of two thousand years is heard far over the green plains, where flocks of sheep are coming home with little tinkling of bells.

"Ahmet Bey,[1] the Beautiful! O! O! Ahmet Bey! [they sing].
Ahmet, the Son of the Mountain Eagle!
His wings spread out and cover us,

[1] [Chief of the Mati. for role in 1922 rebellions, see cat. 116 pp 306-345 --Analy

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

POSTSCRIPT

533
539

The shadow of his wings is over us,
His claws are terrible to our foes.
Ahmet Bey, the Beautiful! O! O! Ahmet Bey!
The men of Dibra came with their rifles,
Elez Jusuf, the chief of the Dibra,
Mustapha Kruja and Zija Dibra,
The Toptani family, curse of Albania,
Hamid Toptani, with nine hundred soldiers,
Nine hundred soldiers armed by Italians,
Came from Durazzo to murder Albania.
Ahmet Bey, the Beautiful! O! O! Ahmet Bey!

"Elez Jusuf goes back to the Dibra,
Besa of peace he has given to Ahmet.
Hamid Toptani flees through the mountains,
Cursed be the trees that give him hiding.
Zija Dibra is sent to Stamboul,
Zija Dibra, exiled from Dibra.
Five thousand napoleons, fine of Durazzo,
Five thousand napoleons, fine of Tirana.
Five villages burned. Let the market place tell
Names of the men who were hanged there at dawn.

"Ahmet Bey, the Beautiful! O! O! Ahmet Bey!
He set three hundred men to work on the roads,
He built a good road from Tirana to Durazzo,
He makes electric lights in the capital of Albania.
O! O! Ahmet Bey, the Beautiful! O! Ahmet Bey!"

THE END

6: Lane, Rose Wilder

background of the rebellion, she presents a summary of Albanian history, of Albania's position among the European powers, and of the way in which this affects Albanian internal affairs. --Analyst/

Field date: none
Analyst: Masha Vorobiov

Evaluation: Traveler-3
Processed in 1956

6: Lane
669

EG1 Albania EG1

/For a description of the rebellion staged by the mountain Ghegs in Tirana and Durazzo in March 1922 against the newly formed Albanian Toshk Government, and of the main participants, see category 116, pp. 289, 301-349. For an account of the historical, economic, and political background of the rebellion, see pp. 289-301./

6: Lane
619

EG1 Albania EG1

/For an account of inter-tribal agreements following the March 1922 rebellion, staged by the mountain Ghegs in Tirana and Durazzo against the newly formed Albanian Toshk Government, see category 116, pp. 333-335./

6: Lane
175

EG1 Albania EG1

/For a description of the rebellion staged by the mountain Ghegs in Tirana and Durazzo in March 1922 against the newly formed Albanian Toshk Government, and of the main participants, see cat. 116, pp. 289, 301-349. For an account of the historical, economic, and political background of the rebellion, see pp. 289-301./